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THE WEEK Junior

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Happy Birthday, America!

The story of America can be told through the bold ideas that charted our nation's course, the brilliant people who made history through their words and actions, the majestic landscapes that inspire awe from coast to coast, and the exciting celebrations and traditions that bring us together.

On the 250th anniversary of our country's founding, *The Week Junior* is delighted to bring you this book packed with knowledge, insights, and facts just for kids. Within these pages, we hope you will discover more about the past and the promise of America—how it began, how it has evolved, and what it aspires to be.

As you read and explore the book, we also hope you will think about these two questions: What do *you* think makes America special? And what can *you* do to help fulfill America's ideals, whether in your family, your school, your community, or the nation? You are the future, and we believe in you!

Andrea Barbalich
Editorial Director
The Week Junior

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GETTY IMAGES

Our government and its monuments

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The US Capitol Building in Washington, DC

The legal document that

The Constitution has been America's foundation for nearly 240 years.

The highest law in the US is both firm and flexible. It began with a group of delegates in Philadelphia and has been adapted many times.

Looking at the Constitution

What is a constitution?

A constitution is a statement of the basic principles and laws of a nation, state, or group. It typically describes the powers and responsibilities of a government. A constitution often states the rights of the people and might also lay out a set of guidelines that should be followed. Most countries today have a written constitution. A few, however, including Israel, Canada, and the UK, do not. (They have other documents that serve a similar purpose.) Of all the written national constitutions, the US Constitution is the oldest and the shortest.

The signing of the Constitution

How it came to be

After declaring independence from Great Britain, the 13 American states each wrote their own constitutions, outlining how they wanted their new governments to work. Together, they created a document called the Articles of Confederation, which gave the central government very little power. Over several months in 1787, a group of 55 delegates from the states met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to amend the Articles of Confederation. Instead, they wrote a new constitution. This gathering became known as the Constitutional Convention. On September 17, 1787, the convention delegates signed the new US Constitution and sent it to the states to be ratified.

GETTY IMAGES (8)

ALMOST DOUBLE
The Constitution was 4,500 words long when it was first written. Today it has nearly 8,000 words.
OOPS!
On the page where the Constitution was signed, the word Pennsylvania is incorrectly spelled as Pensylvania.

The founding document that established the US

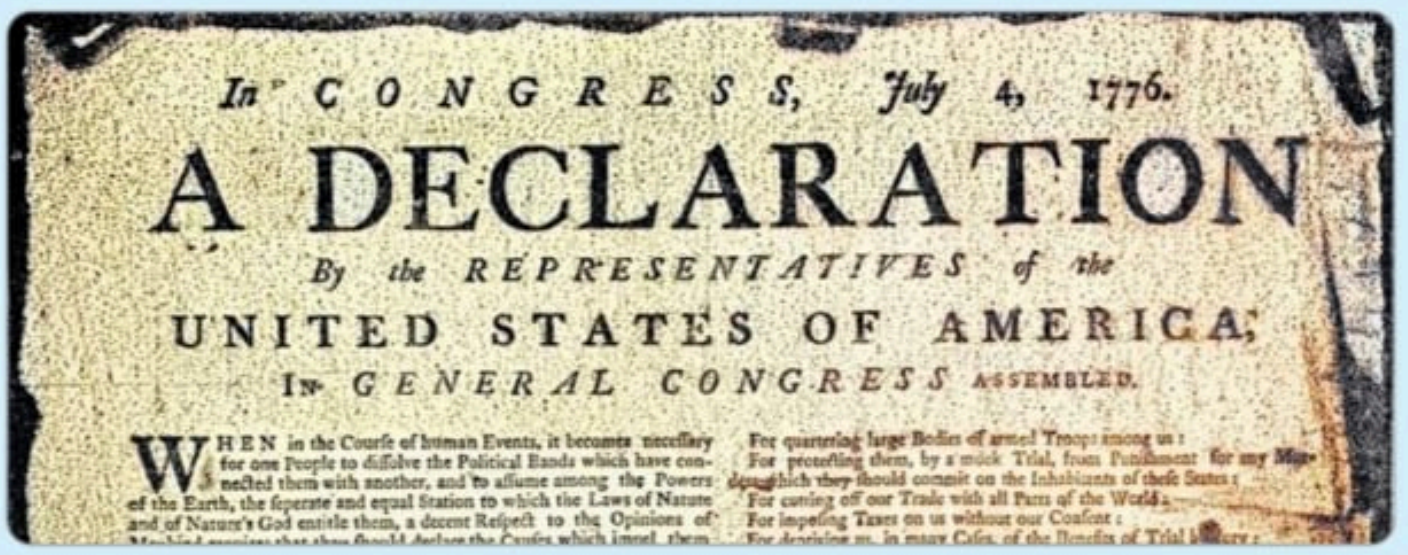
Before there was the Constitution, there was the Declaration of Independence. Written mostly by Thomas Jefferson, the document began with the "unanimous declaration" that the 13 American colonies had separated from Great Britain. It then moved on to its most famous words, stating that "all men are created equal" with the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." It concluded with "we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

The declaration, at approximately 1,320 words, was approved by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. This is why the US celebrates Independence Day every year on July 4. By August 2, 1776, the declaration had been signed by most of the delegates. Because John Hancock was the president of the Congress, his signature was the largest. The original document is kept in the National Archives in Washington, DC.

rules our nation

DID YOU KNOW?
More than 11,000 amendments to the Constitution have been proposed, and 27 have been approved.
We the People
Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United
Article I

"We the People of the United States" begins the preamble to the US Constitution.


In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.
A DECLARATION
By the REPRESENTATIVES of the
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA;
In GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.
WHEN in the Course of human Events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the seperate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent Respect to the Opinions of

The voting age was lowered in 1971.

Complicated decisions

The document's framers debated many questions, including how to elect Presidents, what powers they should have, and how to create equal representation in the new Congress. They decided on a House of Representatives with members based on each state's population and a Senate with two members for every state. Soon after the Constitution was created, framer James Madison drafted 19 amendments and submitted them to Congress. Ten of them were approved and became law on December 15, 1791. These amendments, known as the Bill of Rights, guarantee freedom of speech and other rights. Today, there are 27 amendments, which allowed the Constitution to change as the US changed. The 15th Amendment expanded the right to vote to Black American men. The 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote. The 26th lowered the voting age from 21 to 18.

The US Supreme Court

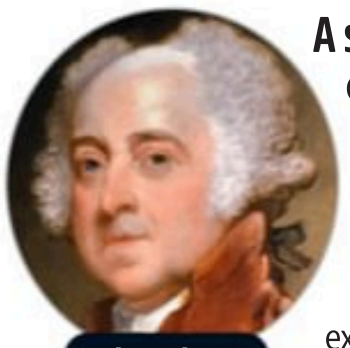
Interpreting the Constitution

The Constitution continues to guide our laws and how the US government functions. The 1803 court case *Marbury v. Madison* established the rule that federal courts can strike down a law if they find that it violates the Constitution. Since then, many cases have gone to the US Supreme Court to determine what is constitutional. Justices of the court have to figure out how the Constitution's principles apply today. For example, are video games a form of free speech and protected under the First Amendment? In a 2011 decision, a few justices said no but the majority said yes. Justices, lawmakers, and citizens sometimes interpret the Constitution differently. Discussions and disagreements about the nation's highest law remind Americans of our past, shape our present, and help determine our future.

The heart and home

Take a look inside the famous mansion where the President lives and leads.

It may be the best-known address in the world: 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in our nation's capital, Washington, DC. The building has been called the President's Palace, the Executive Mansion, and the People's House, but we know it as the White House. It has been the home and workplace of every President since 1800.


John Adams

A symbol of our union

George Washington, the first President, chose the location for the home of our new government in 1791. It took eight years to build. Slavery still existed at the time, and enslaved people did much of the labor. In 1800, President John Adams was the first to move in. President James Monroe had to have the mansion rebuilt a few years later, after British troops set it on fire during the War of 1812. In 1902 President Theodore Roosevelt renovated the building, adding the West Wing as an office space. He also turned a nickname into an official title: the White House.

The Oval Office in 2008

An office, a home, and a museum

The White House sits on 18 acres of land. The Oval Office, which was added by President William Taft to the area known as the West Wing, is the President's office. There, our nation's leader can sit at the famous Resolute (which means determined) desk while signing bills into law or calling world leaders. The President's spouse has offices located elsewhere in the complex. The lower floors feature elegant event spaces. Throughout the building, rooms are filled with valuable paintings, sculptures, and historic furniture. About half a million tourists visit the White House each year.

WOW!
The White House has 132 rooms (including 35 bathrooms), eight staircases, 28 fireplaces, and 147 windows.
Two grand entrances
The North Portico (above) has four front columns under a triangular roof. It's the entrance for formal events like state dinners. On the opposite side of the building, the South Portico (right) has six columns, a curved shape, and the Truman Balcony on the second floor.

Fun in the White House

It's easy to forget that the huge building is also a family's home. Presidents have made changes to it through the years, giving First Families plenty to do, indoors and out.

The Kennedys' trampoline

Spaces to play

Some Presidents added outdoor play areas for their children, like a trampoline (John F. Kennedy), tree house (Jimmy Carter), and swing set (Barack Obama). The First Family can also use a jogging track, swimming pool, and tennis and basketball courts.

Nixon bowling

GETTY IMAGES (2); ALAMY; REUTERS; JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM/NARA; RICHARD NIXON PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM/NARA; RONALD REAGAN PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM/NARA; BRUCE WHITE/WHITE HOUSE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION; MICHAEL MUNDY

# of America

PAINTING PROJECT
The White House requires 570 gallons of Duron's Whisper White paint to cover its outside surface.

AUTOGRAPH, PLEASE!
Artists including Beyoncé, Brad Paisley, and Jon Batiste have all performed at White House state dinners.

Indoor entertainment

There's a game room where people can play pool or table tennis, and a private bowling alley that President Richard Nixon enjoyed. During his Presidency, Franklin Roosevelt added a movie theater where the family and their guests could have private screenings.

President Ronald Reagan with his family

Room to roam

In the residence, there's a map room, a music room designed for President Bill Clinton to play his saxophone, a sun room, and several guest bedrooms, like the Lincoln Bedroom. The massive lawn outside is a great place to play catch, run around with pets, or build a snowman.

The Press Briefing Room in 2008

A busy place

The White House, the headquarters of the executive branch of our government, buzzes with activity every day. About 3,000 staff members, ranging from government aides and staff to housekeepers, butlers, and the President's personal assistant, keep the place running. The President and close advisers regularly meet in the Cabinet Room and discuss urgent, top-secret matters in the Situation Room. The press secretary updates reporters in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room. Foreign leaders are honored with formal dinners in the State Dining Room and served dessert from a special kitchen known as the "chocolate shop." If the President and First Family ever needed to escape from danger, there are tunnels and bunkers under the building.

The residence in 2016

The life of the First Family

The President's family lives in the Executive Residence, located on the top two floors of the central wing. From there, the President can easily walk to the Oval Office through the West Colonnade, also known as the "45-second commute." Life in the White House is exciting but comes with some limitations. It can be difficult to have privacy, for example. The family can't leave the building without Secret Service agents, whose job is to keep them safe 24 hours a day. Windows in the White House also can't be opened, for security reasons. But there are many advantages, like living in a grand home, having a front-row seat to the workings of our government, and being part of the nation's history.

Where our laws and

Members of Congress serve as the voice of the American people.

Most of the major laws that govern our lives are made in the halls of Congress, one of the three branches of the US government.

The US Constitution

What is Congress?

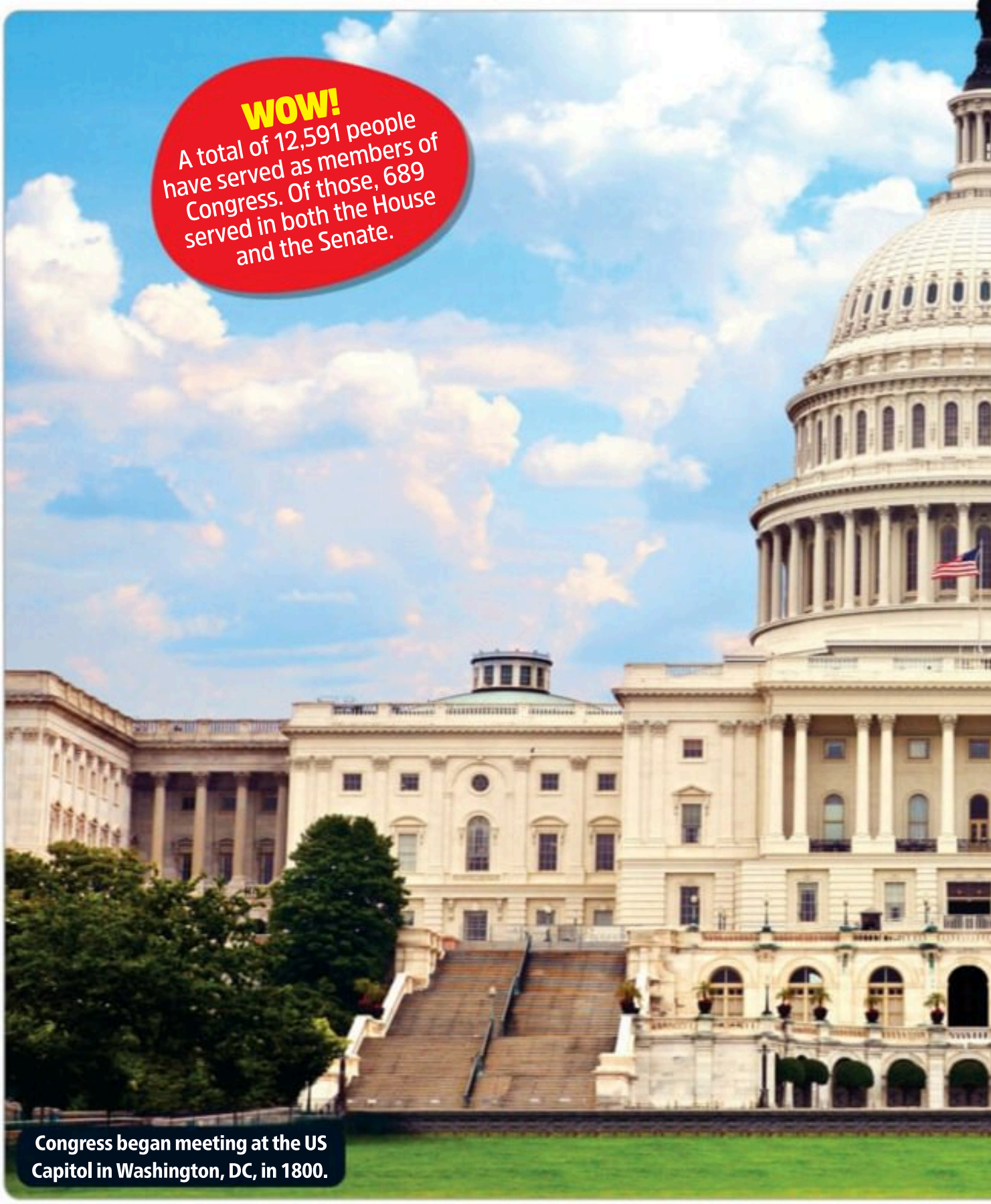
The US Constitution established Congress as the legislative branch of the federal government, in balance with two other branches—executive (President) and judicial (courts). Congress is made of two parts: the Senate and the House of Representatives. Each state sends two people to serve in the Senate, for a total of 100 senators. The number of representatives a state can send to the House depends on its population. Montana has two; California has 52. In total, the House has 435 representatives (and six non-voting members). Besides making laws, Congress can approve treaties, oversee taxes, and declare war.

Signing the Constitution

Shaping the nation

The first session of Congress was scheduled to meet on March 4, 1789, at New York City's Federal Hall. But many members, traveling by ship or horse, were delayed by winter storms. The House finally convened on April 1, with the Senate following on April 6. The first Congress set up most of the policies for the new nation's government and certified the election of George Washington as President and John Adams as Vice President.

WOW!
A total of 12,591 people have served as members of Congress. Of those, 689 served in both the House and the Senate.


Congress began meeting at the US Capitol in Washington, DC, in 1800.

Perks & quirks

Working in the US Congress comes with enormous responsibilities as well as some fun—and unusual—benefits. Here are a few.

The US Capitol subway

Capitol subway

In the early 1900s, a train system was built under the Capitol to help members of Congress move quickly between the chambers. There are two lines to the Senate (north) side and one on the House (south) side. Each ride takes less than a minute.

GETTY IMAGES (7); ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

policies are made

DUAL ROLE
The Vice President of the US is also the president of the Senate and can break a tie in a Senate vote.

DID YOU KNOW?
About 15,000 bills are introduced in each session of Congress.

Congress in session

A bill becomes a law

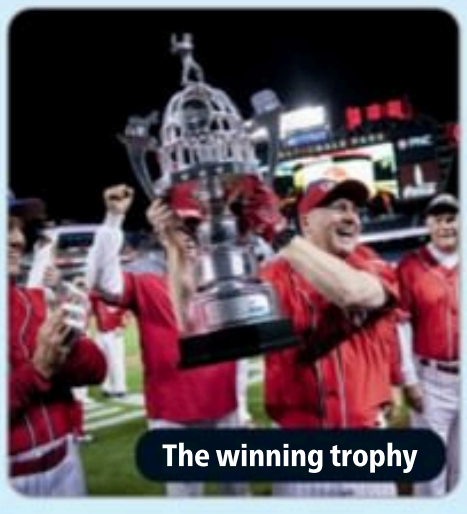
Today, Congress meets at the US Capitol Building in Washington, DC. Lawmakers in either half of Congress can introduce a bill, which is a draft of a law. The bill is discussed by a committee. If the committee approves it, all members can then debate it on the "floor" and propose changes. After that, a vote is held on whether to pass the bill. If a majority votes yes, it is sent to the other half of Congress and the process repeats. In order for a bill to become law, it must be passed by both bodies and signed by the President.

Participating in democracy

Senators serve six-year terms, while House members are elected every two years. Every other November, an election is held to fill all 435 seats in the House and, depending on the year, a varying number of Senate seats. Every four years, a President and Vice President are also chosen. In other years, when the vote takes place about halfway through the President's term, the event is called a midterm election. (There will be a midterm election on November 3, 2026.) In any election, the party that wins a greater number of seats in the Senate and House has more power to control activity in Congress and make laws that match its goals. When Americans go to the polls to vote, they help to shape the country's future.

Candy desk

Desk 80 in the Senate is nicknamed the "candy desk." Senator George Murphy of California was assigned the desk in 1968, and he had a sweet tooth. Senators have been stocking the drawer with free candy ever since.



The winning trophy

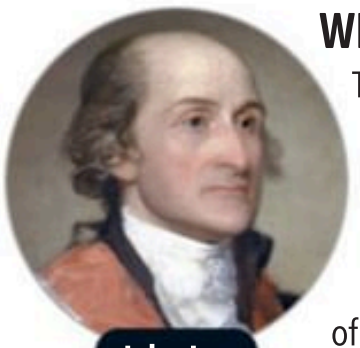
Baseball game

Every summer, Republican and Democratic members of Congress put aside their differences to play a baseball game for charity, with the winning team receiving a trophy. Representative John Tener organized the first game in 1909.

The highest court

These nine justices make decisions that affect the entire nation.

Few other countries in the world have a court as powerful as the Supreme Court of the United States (also known as SCOTUS), making it what has been called "distinctly American."



John Jay

What is the court?

The US Supreme Court was created by the Constitution in 1789, and its main function is to uphold that document. The court is part of the judicial branch of government. It balances the other branches—executive (President) and legislative (Congress, which makes laws)—to ensure a fair government. The court was initially made up of six men who helped write the Constitution, including John Jay, the first chief justice (most senior member). The court expanded to nine justices in 1869 and has remained at that number ever since. Justices serve for life or until they step down. When there is an open seat, the President nominates a justice and the Senate votes on whether to confirm them.

The Exchange building in 1790

The early years

The first meeting of the Supreme Court took place on February 2, 1790, at the Exchange building in New York City. The first decision, handed down on August 3, 1791, involved a financial dispute between a farmer and a family. The court moved to Washington, DC, in 1800. When John Marshall was sworn in as the fourth chief justice in 1801, he wore a plain black robe. His choice led to the attire that US judges, including Supreme Court justices, still wear today when presiding in court.

The current justices of the Supreme Court

DOUBLE DUTY
William Howard Taft is the only person to be a US President (1909–1913) and a Supreme Court justice (1921–1930).

Sonia Sotomayor
NOMINATED BY: Barack Obama in 2009
FUN FACT: She has written several children's books, including *Turning Pages: My Life Story.*

Clarence Thomas
NOMINATED BY: George H.W. Bush in 1991
FUN FACT: He and his wife travel around the US in their 40-foot motor home.

Amy Coney Barrett
NOMINATED BY: Donald Trump in 2020
FUN FACT: She is the oldest of seven children and a mother to seven children.

Neil Gorsuch
NOMINATED BY: Donald Trump in 2017
FUN FACT: His mother was the first woman to head the Environmental Protection Agency.

GETTY IMAGES (4); FRED SCHILLING, COLLECTION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

in the land

ORDER OF THE COURT
For official photos, newer justices stand in back and more senior ones sit in front, with the Chief Justice in the center.

Chief Justice John Roberts
NOMINATED BY: George W. Bush in 2005
FUN FACT: He played the role of Peppermint Patty in a production of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* at his all-boy high school.

Samuel Alito
NOMINATED BY: George W. Bush in 2005
FUN FACT: In his college yearbook, he wrote that he would one day "warm a seat on the Supreme Court."

Elena Kagan
NOMINATED BY: Barack Obama in 2010
FUN FACT: As a new justice, she had a frozen yogurt machine installed in the Supreme Court cafeteria.

Brett Kavanaugh
NOMINATED BY: Donald Trump in 2018
FUN FACT: He has coached his daughters' basketball teams, answering to "Coach K."

Ketanji Brown Jackson
NOMINATED BY: Joe Biden in 2022
FUN FACT: As a debater in high school, she won a prestigious national oratory title.

Inside the Supreme Court today

How the court works

The Supreme Court spends most of its time hearing appeals (challenges) to decisions made in state or federal courts. Appeals are usually made by someone who lost a case in one of these lower courts and wants a higher court to review the decision. Sometimes those appeals go all the way to the Supreme Court. The justices receive about 7,000 requests to review a case each year and accept between 100 and 150 of them. Once a case is accepted, lawyers for each side present their arguments to the justices, who can ask questions. There is no jury. The justices then meet privately to debate the case. After what is usually several months, they make a decision by majority vote and announce it. When the Supreme Court makes a decision, it is final and all other courts in the US must follow it. In that way, the court has the power to change laws that affect people's everyday lives.

The court building

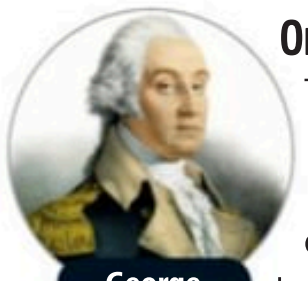
Changes under consideration

Critics say the Supreme Court is too political because some Presidents have the opportunity to appoint justices while others don't. And because Presidents tend to nominate justices who share their beliefs, the court can lean one way or the other. Some people want Congress to expand the court to 13 justices to ensure fairness. Others are calling for limits to the number of years a justice can serve. In 2025, an act was introduced in Congress proposing an 18-year term limit on any new Supreme Court justice appointed. Polls show most Americans support term limits for justices.

The defenders of

Learn about the American military and the people who serve in it.

America celebrates Armed Forces Day on the third Saturday in May and Memorial Day on the last Monday in May. These holidays honor those who have served in the military (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Space Force), plus the reserve and National Guard.


George Washington

Origins of the US military

The Army, Navy, and Marines have been America's fighting forces since 1775, when they were created to protect the 13 colonies. Led by George Washington and Esek Hopkins, they fought the Revolutionary War against Britain. In 1790, Congress created the Coast Guard (then called the Revenue-Marine). Over time, more branches were added. The Army's air division became the Air Force in 1947.

A powerful purpose

The military stands ready to defend the US abroad and at home and works to promote peace and security. The Army mostly serves on land, the Navy at sea, and the Air Force in the sky, while the Marines can be sent anywhere. The Coast Guard protects our waters, and the Space Force guards US interests in space. Reservists and the National Guard are ready for duty but don't serve full-time. US troops are stationed in about 170 countries, and the US has approximately 750–800 bases in about 80 countries around the world. Troops also help out in major emergencies at home. During the Covid-19 pandemic, they cared for patients, distributed protective gear, and gave vaccines.

TOP RANK
The highest military rank in the US is five-star general. Only nine people have achieved it.
BEYOND BORDERS
Created in 2019, the Space Force is the first new military branch in 72 years.
STATE OF SERVICE
South Carolina is the state with the highest percentage of young people who join the armed forces.

Military milestones

1940

The first Black pilots in the US military began training in Tuskegee, Alabama. The Tuskegee Airmen flew more than 15,000 missions.

1942

The first Navajo code talkers sent secret messages over radio waves. More than 400 Native American soldiers did this work during World War II (1939–1945).

1943

The Women's Army Corps (WAC) was created. Its 150,000 members were the first women other than nurses to serve in the US Army overseas.

GETTY IMAGES (11); THE U.S. DEPT OF DEFENSE (6)

our country

The six main branches of the armed forces

Air Force

Army

Coast Guard

Marines

Navy

Space Force

1951
Army units were racially integrated. Before then, Black soldiers served in separate units from white soldiers and were rarely allowed in combat.

2015
For the first time, all military jobs became available to women, including serving in frontline combat. This opened about 230,000 new roles to women.

The Pentagon, headquarters of national defense

Understanding military ranks

The military has a strict organizational system with people ranked above and below each other. At the top is the President of the United States, who is the commander in chief of the armed forces. Next in line are high-level leaders called secretaries, who manage each military department and oversee the forces. The secretaries are chosen by the President and approved by the US Senate. Within each branch of the military are several ranks, from the newest recruits to the officers in charge. Many troops work their way up the ranks through years of service, with some reaching a top position of general or admiral.

A military band

The people who serve

More than 1.3 million people currently serve in the military. The Army has the largest number of troops, followed by the Navy and Air Force, the Marines, and the Coast Guard. For hundreds of years, men were required to serve in the US Armed Forces, but that hasn't happened since 1973. Today, men and women voluntarily join. Some attend military school or join the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), which trains high school and college students. About 50% of all enlisted troops are age 25 or younger, and about 15% are women. Troops can hold a variety of jobs, including gathering information about other countries, medical care, cooking, technology, language translation—even playing in a military band. Many people have long military careers, while others return to civilian life to pursue other jobs or careers after their service.

A symbolic beacon

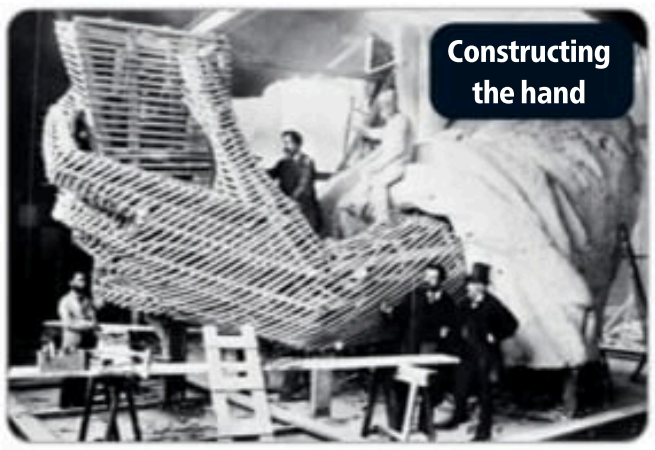
Discover the history and meaning of a famous US landmark.

She stands above New York Harbor, lifting a torch that lights the sky. The Statue of Liberty is a work of art and much more. Also called "Lady Liberty," she is an icon representing the United States of America.

Édouard de Laboulaye

Lady Liberty is born

When slavery officially ended in the US in 1865, a French abolitionist named Édouard de Laboulaye wanted to give a gift in celebration. He discussed the idea with artist Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, who decided to create a sculpture for the occasion. Many historians believe that the design Bartholdi chose, a woman in a robe and crown, was intended to represent Libertas, the Roman goddess of freedom. He began fundraising in France and the US, even building the statue's torch-bearing arm and carrying it around to inspire donations. On a trip to New York, he pinpointed Bedloe's Island, near Manhattan, as the artwork's future home.


Constructing the hand

A long journey

After creating several models, Bartholdi built the statue from 1876 to 1884, using 62,000 pounds of copper sheets laid over a 250,000-pound steel structure. He named it "Liberty Enlightening the World." To get the statue to the US, it had to be taken apart, packed into 214 crates, and shipped across the ocean. After the boat arrived in June 1885, workers spent four months putting the statue back together and placing it on its pedestal. On October 28, 1886, President Grover Cleveland dedicated the statue. Before thousands of people, Bartholdi climbed the statue and pulled away a gigantic French flag to reveal her face.

DID YOU KNOW?
The Statue of Liberty is struck by lightning about 600 times each year.

WOW!
The statue is 151 feet tall—305 feet with the pedestal. That is about the height of a 22-story building.

Lady Liberty is one of the world's most recognizable statues.

GETTY IMAGES (8); ALAMY (2)

# of freedom

What the symbols mean

The torch

Lady Liberty's torch, which represents enlightenment, is lit by 16 floodlights at night. During a restoration of the statue from 1984 to 1986, the original torch was replaced with a new one covered in bright gold leaf.

The crown

The crown's spikes form a halo around the statue's head. Some say the seven points symbolize the seven continents of the world and the "seven seas" (a term representing the world's seas and oceans). Others say the points represent the Sun's rays.

The tablet

In her left hand, Lady Liberty holds a law tablet. The artist, who admired America's fight for freedom, marked the date of America's independence from British rule—July 4, 1776—in Roman numerals.

The robe

The Statue of Liberty is dressed in a stola, a long gown commonly worn by women in ancient Rome. The Roman goddess Libertas was often depicted wearing a similar robe.

The chains

A broken shackle and chains lie at her feet, symbolizing newfound freedom. Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi originally planned for Lady Liberty to hold these in her hand but put a tablet there instead.

An immigrant family arrives at Ellis Island.

Words of welcome

In 1892, the nation's first immigration inspection station opened on Ellis Island, about 4,000 feet away from the statue. People entering the US from other countries were required to stop at Ellis Island for medical and legal examinations. As immigrants arrived in New York Harbor, they saw Lady Liberty raising a torch, as if to guide them to their new home. The Statue of Liberty had become a symbol of welcome. In 1903, a bronze plaque was added to the inner wall of the pedestal to express that idea. On this plaque is a poem called "The New Colossus," written by Emma Lazarus in 1883 for an auction in support of building the statue. "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," the poem reads. "Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Liberty Island

Standing tall and green

Over time, air and water turned Lady Liberty's copper "skin" a bluish-green color in a process called oxidation. Authorities considered having the statue painted back to the original copper color. However, when newspapers published the idea in 1906, the public disagreed and the plan was scrapped. To this day, she stands tall and green on the renamed Liberty Island. About 3 to 4 million people visit the statue every year, boarding ferry boats from New York and New Jersey to see the national icon and climb a spiral staircase up to her crown, looking out over the country she represents.

The history of the US

NASA has been exploring space, from the Moon to Mars, for 68 years.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has broken many barriers in science and space discovery since it was founded in the summer of 1958.

Alan Shepard

A race to be first

In the 1950s, the US and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, a former country that included Russia) were competing to see which nation could explore space first. The USSR pulled ahead of the US when it successfully launched a satellite called Sputnik in 1957. In response, President Dwight Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act into law on July 29, 1958, creating NASA. The agency officially opened on October 1, 1958, and sent the first American, Alan Shepard, into space on May 5, 1961. In a famous speech three weeks later, President John F. Kennedy challenged NASA to put an astronaut on the Moon.

The famous "Earthrise" photo

The rise of Apollo

The Apollo program was the agency's response to Kennedy's challenge. Apollo 7, in 1968, was the first Apollo mission with a crew. Later that year, Apollo 8 sent humans to the Moon and back for the first time. The astronauts on this mission snapped a famous photograph of an "Earthrise," the Earth rising up beyond the surface of the Moon. On July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong of Apollo 11 became the first person to walk on the Moon, followed by Buzz Aldrin about 20 minutes later. In 1970, disaster nearly struck when the Apollo 13 spacecraft was damaged mid-flight. By working closely with mission control on Earth, the astronauts safely returned home.

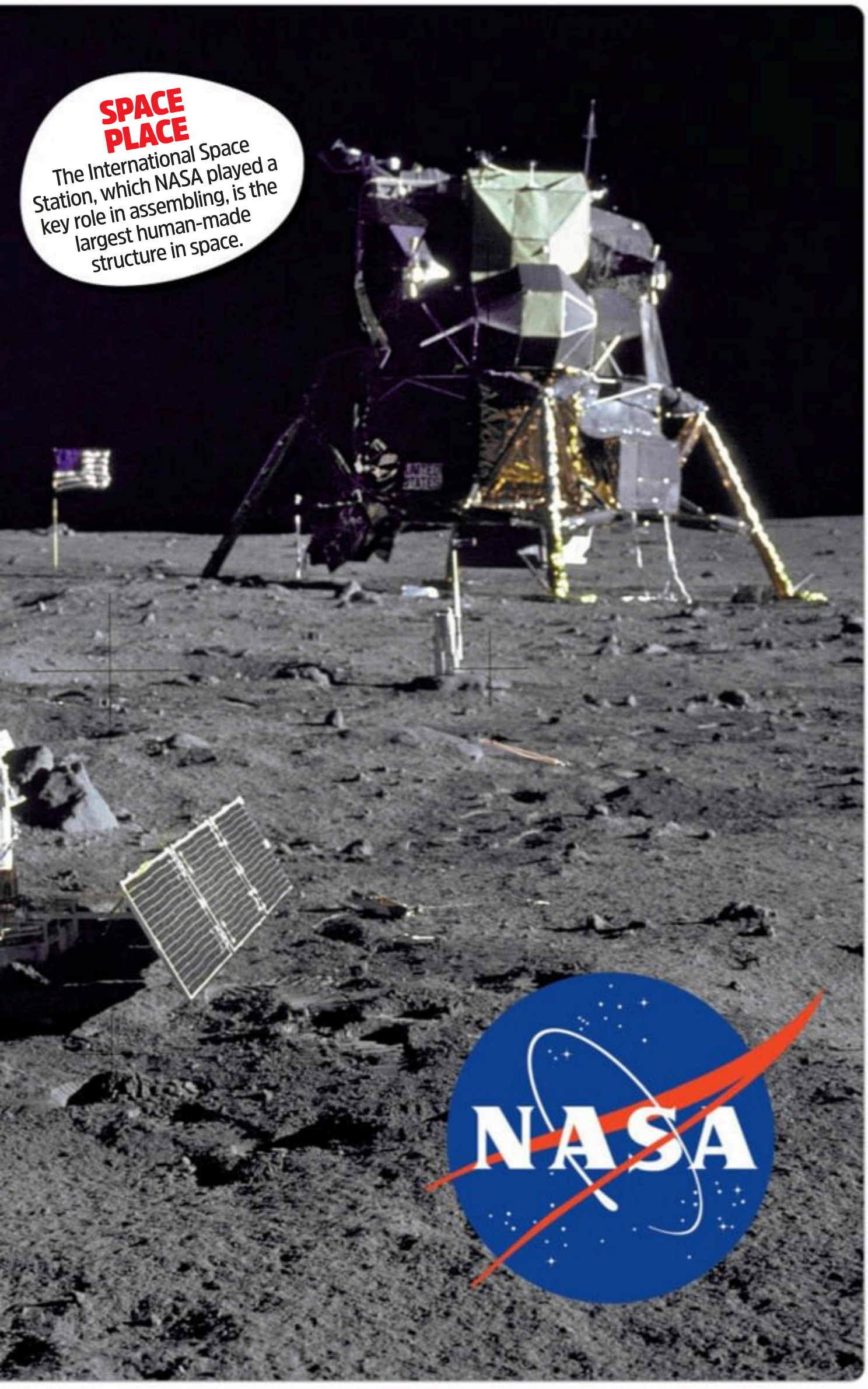
BLAST OFF
NASA's Apollo program sent 12 astronauts to the Moon, starting with Apollo 8 in 1968 and ending with Apollo 17 in 1972.

WOW!
Peggy Whitson, a retired US astronaut, spent a total of 695 days in space, more than any other American.

Astronaut Buzz Aldrin surveys the Apollo 11 landing site on the Moon on July 20, 1969.

NASA (3); ROBERT MARKOWITZ/NASA JSC; GETTY IMAGES (3)

space agency


SPACE PLACE
The International Space Station, which NASA played a key role in assembling, is the largest human-made structure in space.
NASA

Skylab orbiting the Earth

Space stations and shuttles

NASA shifted its focus away from the Moon when it launched its first space station, Skylab, in 1973 and landed a vehicle, Viking 1, on Mars for the first time in 1976. In 1981, NASA ushered in the era of the space shuttle, the first reusable vehicle for spaceflight. The shuttles enabled numerous accomplishments, including the creation of the International Space Station, a large spacecraft and science laboratory in orbit around Earth. But this technology was also at the center of two of the worst tragedies in NASA history—the destruction of the shuttle Challenger in 1986 and the shuttle Columbia in 2003, both of which resulted in the deaths of all seven crew members aboard.

New frontiers

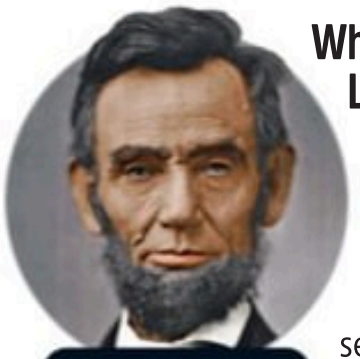
The Artemis II crew

NASA has landed five robotic vehicles (called rovers) on Mars, starting with Sojourner in 1997. The most recent, Perseverance, landed in February 2021 and is still there. In December 2021, NASA launched the James Webb Space Telescope, the most powerful telescope ever put into space. Also underway is Artemis, a multi-phase program with a goal of sending humans back to the Moon for the first time in nearly 55 years. The second phase, Artemis II, is planned for 2026 and includes the first woman and first person of color to travel to the Moon, while Artemis III is set for 2027. Both missions will fly around the Moon but not land. By 2028, NASA hopes Artemis IV will touch down on the lunar surface. "Human spaceflight is a relay race," said Victor Glover, the pilot of Artemis II. "And that baton has been passed, generation to generation."

A grand monument

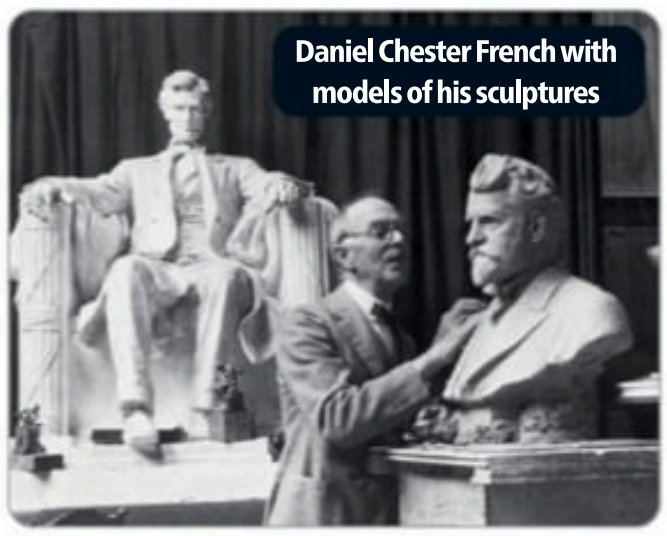
In the US capital, this tribute has stood for more than a century.

The Lincoln Memorial was built to honor Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the US. It was completed in 1922 and is recognized for its architecture and its symbolism.


Abraham Lincoln

Who was Abraham Lincoln?

Born in Kentucky on February 12, 1809, Lincoln had a difficult childhood. He became a lawyer and served in the US Congress before being elected President in 1860. During the Civil War (1861–1865), he led the Northern states, which had outlawed slavery, against the Southern states, which wanted to keep slavery. Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, calling for the end of slavery, and the North effectively won the war on April 9, 1865. Lincoln was assassinated the following week.


Daniel Chester French with models of his sculptures

Building a monument

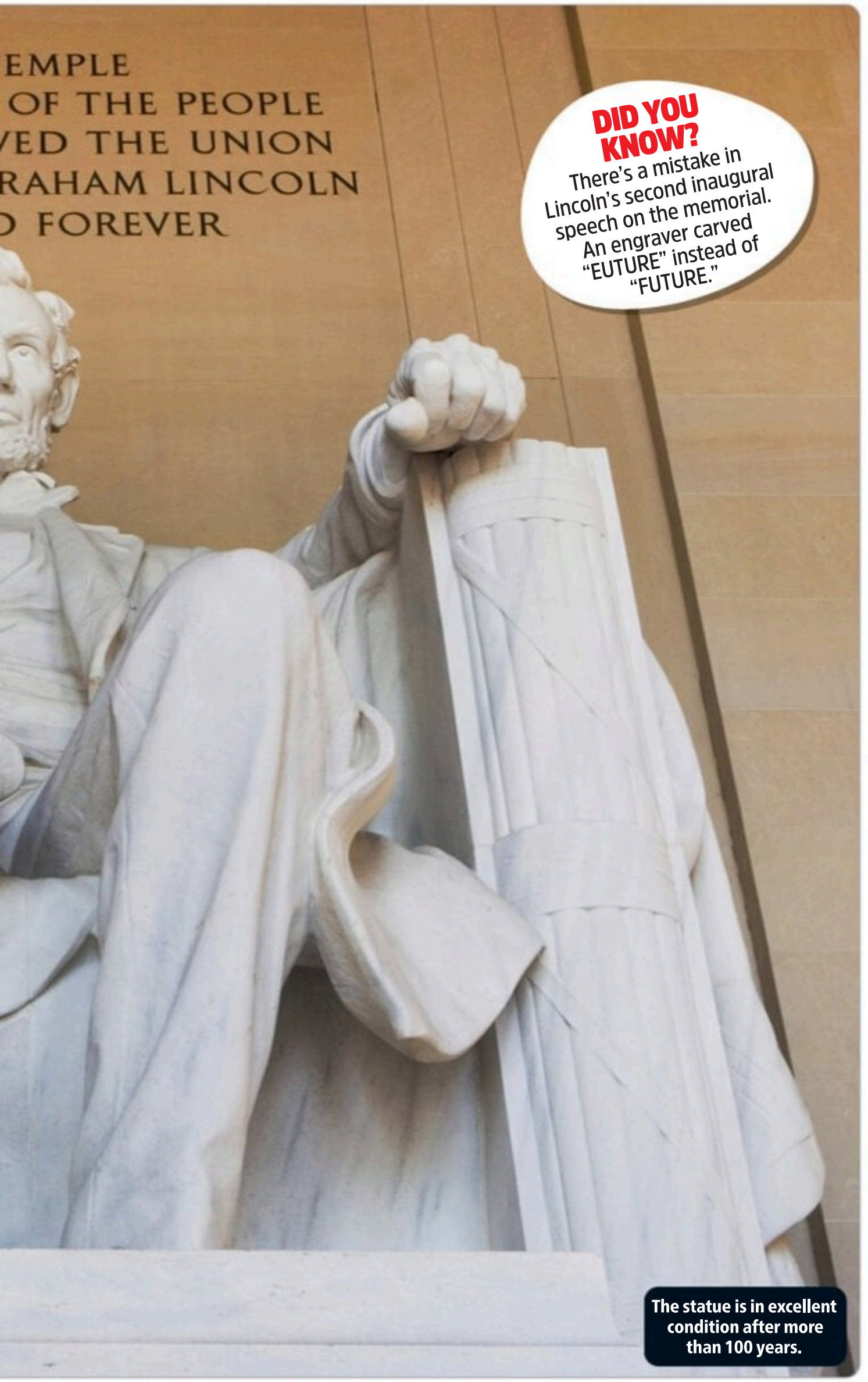
In 1867, to heal the nation after Lincoln's death, Congress proposed a memorial to the President. New York architect Henry Bacon chose a Greek temple as inspiration for the granite, marble, and limestone monument, and workers broke ground on February 12, 1914. Daniel Chester French of Massachusetts designed a 19-foot-tall sculpture of Lincoln as the centerpiece. The Piccirilli brothers, six marble cutters from New York, carved it from 28 blocks of white marble. The blocks were moved to Washington, DC, where they were assembled. The memorial was dedicated on May 30, 1922.

FUN FACT
A three-story basement, known as the undercroft, is located below the Lincoln Memorial.

SPECIAL GUEST
Abraham Lincoln's son Robert Todd Lincoln attended the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial.

GETTY IMAGES

to a President


EMPLE
OF THE PEOPLE
VED THE UNION
RAHAM LINCOLN
D FOREVER
DID YOU KNOW?
There's a mistake in Lincoln's second inaugural speech on the memorial. An engraver carved "EUTURE" instead of "FUTURE."
The statue is in excellent condition after more than 100 years.

The March on Washington in 1963

Symbolic site

The Lincoln Memorial is located in a position of honor on the National Mall, aligned with the Washington Monument and the Capitol Building, where Presidential inaugurations are held. Its 36 columns represent the states that existed when Lincoln died, and decorative murals depicting "Emancipation" and "Unity" adorn its south and north walls. Two of Lincoln's most famous speeches, the Gettysburg Address and his second inaugural speech, are inscribed beneath the paintings. The steps of the monument have been the backdrop of many cultural and political events, including the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech and civil rights marches. The memorial has become a symbol of the American ideals of unity, freedom, and democracy.

View from the memorial

The Lincoln Memorial today

One of the most visited places in Washington, DC, the memorial draws more than 8 million visitors each year. In May 2022, thousands of people gathered at the Lincoln Memorial to celebrate the 100th anniversary of its dedication. The National Park Service, which cares for the monument, held a special ceremony to honor its history and meaning. In 2023, construction began on a new museum in the area located underneath the memorial. The museum is scheduled to be finished in July for America's 250th birthday. It will feature exhibits, as well as an immersive theater, to help visitors learn more about the construction of the memorial and its place in US history.

A view of Yosemite National Park in California

GETTY IMAGES

Our beautiful places

26 National Parks
28 The Brooklyn Bridge
30 The Great Lakes
32 The Appalachian Trail
34 The Mississippi River
36 Niagara Falls
38 The Golden Gate Bridge
40 The Harriet Tubman Byway
42 The Gateway Arch
44 The Pacific Coast Highway

Natural treasures for

Explore the nation's most stunning and cherished landscapes.

America's national parks are public places protected by the US government and meant to be enjoyed by the people. These wild and beautiful lands range from the depths of the Grand Canyon to the heights of North America's tallest peak in Alaska. In 1916, the National Park Service (NPS) was created to preserve the parks and the animals, plants, water, and air within them. Today, the NPS maintains 433 areas, including the national parks, covering more than 85 million acres.

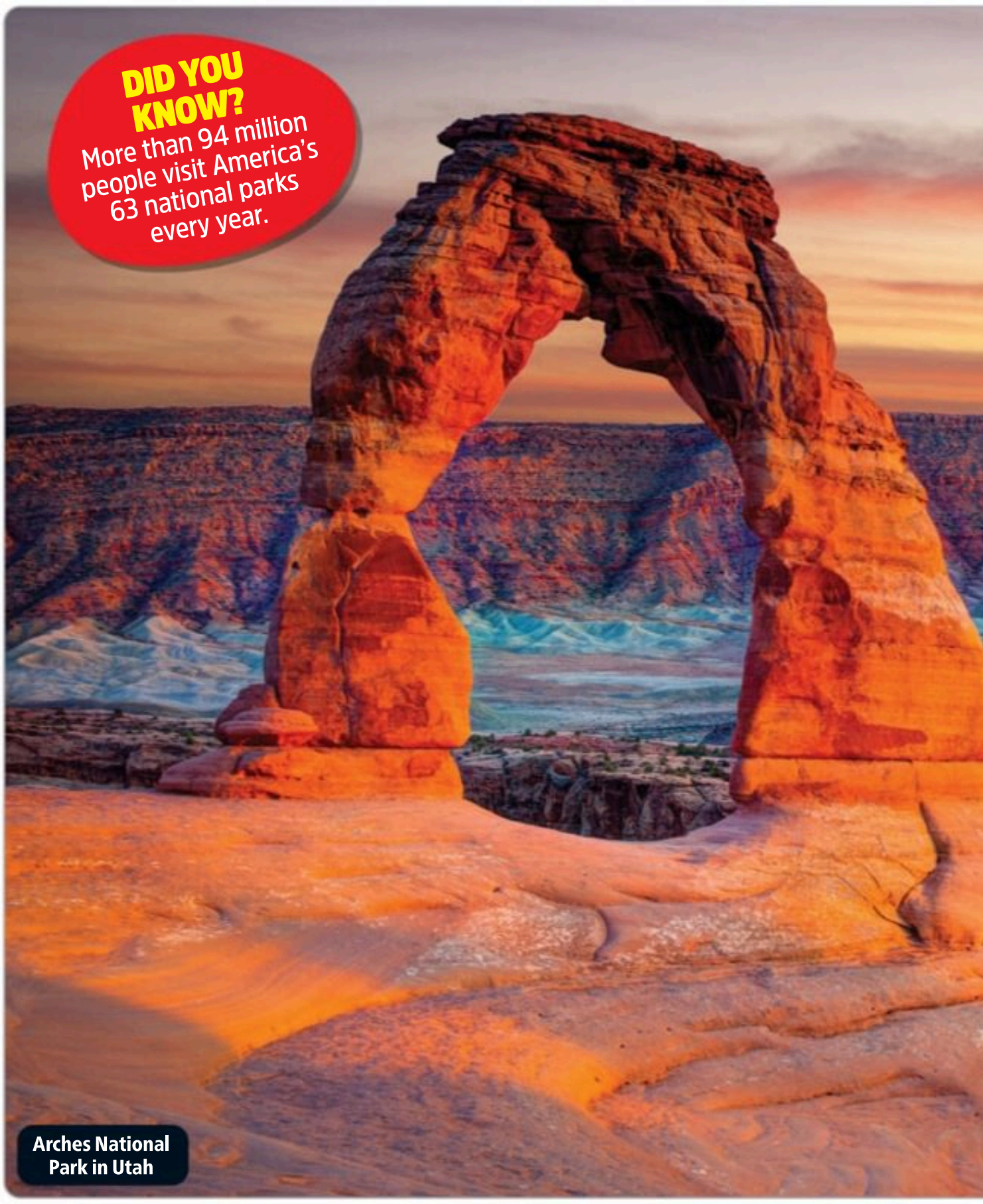
How the parks began

In the mid-1800s, conservationists began fighting to keep large areas of American wilderness from being destroyed by people who wanted to build cities. On March 1, 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed a bill that established Yellowstone National Park. That year, about 300 visitors traveled by stagecoach to see the first national park, located mostly in Wyoming. By 1916, dozens of parks had been established.

The NPS mission

Since its earliest days, the organization's goal has been to make the parks available to all while also preserving them for future generations. "This is an American invention," said filmmaker Ken Burns, who made a documentary about the parks. "For the first time in human history, land was set aside not for kings or noblemen or the very rich but for everybody and for all time."

DID YOU KNOW?
More than 94 million people visit America's 63 national parks every year.



Arches National Park in Utah

Animals in the parks

Mountain goats

Found in Glacier National Park (in Montana), these great climbers aren't true goats. They belong to a species more closely related to the antelope.

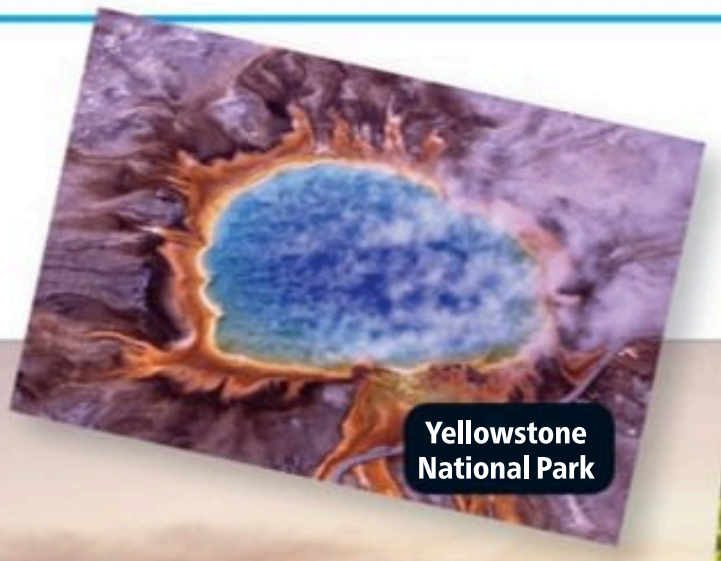
Steller's jays

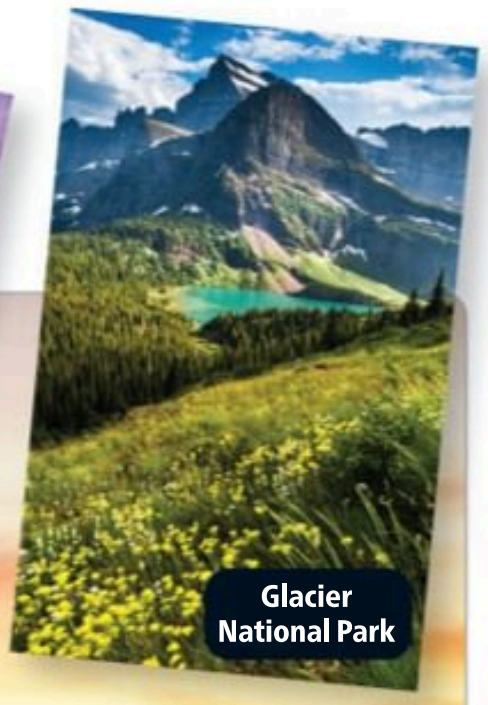
These bright blue and black birds are commonly found in Mount Rainier National Park (in Washington state). They can imitate the sounds of other birds, squirrels, cats, dogs, chickens—and even some mechanical objects.

US NATIONAL PARK SERVICE; ALAMY (2); MEDIA BAKERY

All about our national parks

all


Yellowstone National Park


Glacier National Park

Denali National Park

National parks by the numbers

20,310 feet is the height of the highest mountain peak in North America, located in Denali National Park (in Alaska).

143 degrees Fahrenheit is the average temperature of the 47 hot springs in Hot Springs National Park (in Arkansas).

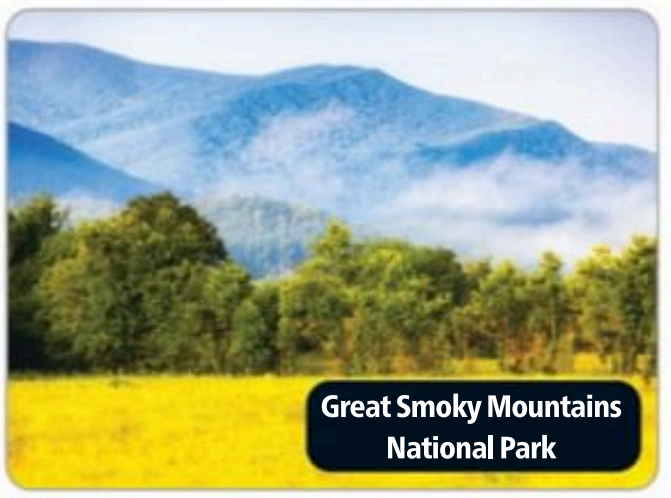
36 feet is the diameter (at its base) of the world's largest tree, found in Sequoia National Park (in California).

400 feet is the eruption height of the tallest active geyser in the world, in Yellowstone National Park (in Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana).

6 shipwrecks have been mapped over nearly 100 years in the ocean areas of Biscayne National Park (in Florida).

Important people in park history

Theodore Roosevelt—the 26th US President, who served from 1901 to 1909—is often called "the conservation President." In 1903, he and John Muir, another conservationist, spent three days camping in Yosemite, where Roosevelt is believed to have slept on a pile of 40 wool blankets. After that trip, he established five national parks, including Yosemite (in California).


Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Most popular parks

Great Smoky Mountains National Park (in North Carolina and Tennessee) draws an average of about 13 million visitors each year, making it the most-visited park in the country. Zion National Park (in Utah) comes in second, with an average of about 4.8 million visitors per year, and Grand Canyon National Park (in Arizona) is third, with about 4.7 million visitors a year.

Salamanders

Great Smoky Mountains National Park (in North Carolina and Tennessee) is known as the "salamander capital of the world." Salamanders found there range in size from less than 2 inches to nearly 2½ feet.

Sea turtles

Five species of sea turtles make their home in Dry Tortugas National Park (in Florida). They nest on the park's sandy beaches.

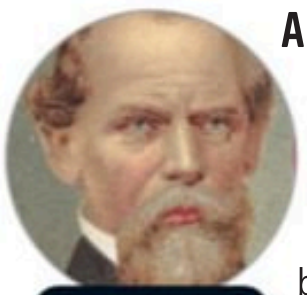
Caribou

Also known as reindeer, these animals found in Denali National Park (in Alaska) are the only members of the deer family whose males and females grow antlers. They are shed every year.

A fantastic feat of

A creative vision resulted in an iconic New York City structure.

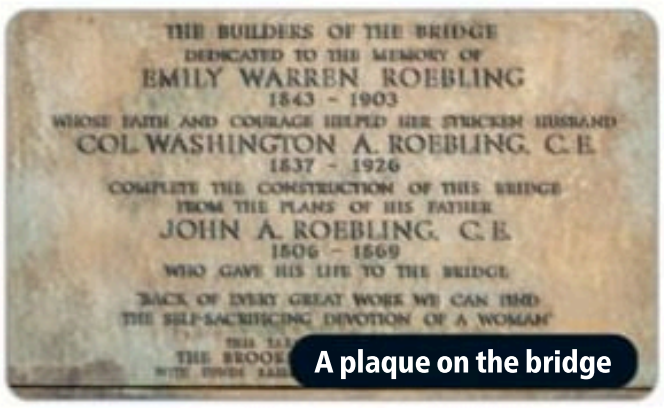
The Brooklyn Bridge, which stretches over New York City's East River to connect Brooklyn and Manhattan, is traveled by thousands of people every day. One of the city's most stunning sights began with an ambitious proposal.



John Roebling

A plan forms

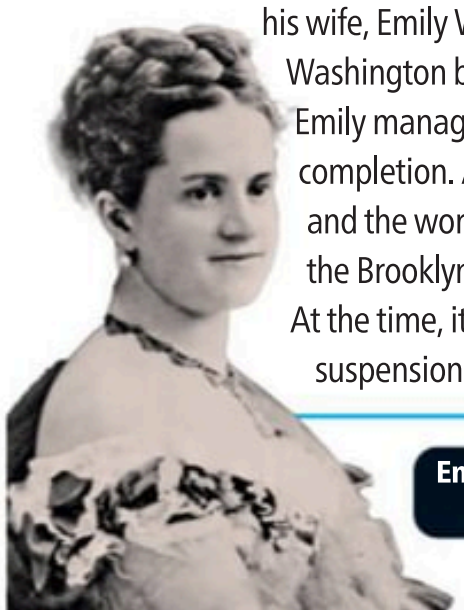
In 1831, engineer John Roebling immigrated to the US from Germany. He was a pioneer builder of the suspension bridge, a type that features a roadway hanging from wires called cables. One day in New York City, Roebling was riding a ferry across the East River from Brooklyn to Manhattan when he had an idea. To city lawmakers, he proposed a bridge with cables made of steel, connected by two stone towers, to make it stronger than any bridge ever built. Above the road would be a pedestrian path "to stroll over the bridge on fine days." In 1867, his plan was approved.


THE BUILDERS OF THE BRIDGE
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
EMILY WARREN ROEBLING
1843 - 1903
COL. WASHINGTON A. ROEBLING, C.E.
1837 - 1926
COMPLETE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THIS BRIDGE
FROM THE PLANS OF HIS FATHER
JOHN A. ROEBLING, C.E.
1806 - 1869
WHO GAVE HIS LIFE TO THE BRIDGE
BACK OF EVERY GREAT WORK WE CAN FIND
THE SELF-SACRIFICING DEVOTION OF A WOMAN

A plaque on the bridge

Building begins

The construction of the Brooklyn Bridge began in 1869. It was dangerous work and caused several deaths, including that of Roebling, who died from an infection contracted in an accident at the site. His son Washington was named chief engineer in his place and began directing operations with his wife, Emily Warren Roebling. When Washington became ill in the 1870s, Emily managed the vast project to completion. After a total of 14 years and the work of thousands of people, the Brooklyn Bridge was finished. At the time, it was the longest suspension bridge in the world.



Emily Warren Roebling

STRONG AND STABLE
The steel cables that were used to build the Brooklyn Bridge contained more than 14,000 miles of wire and weighed nearly 3,500 tons.

The Brooklyn Bridge in the movies

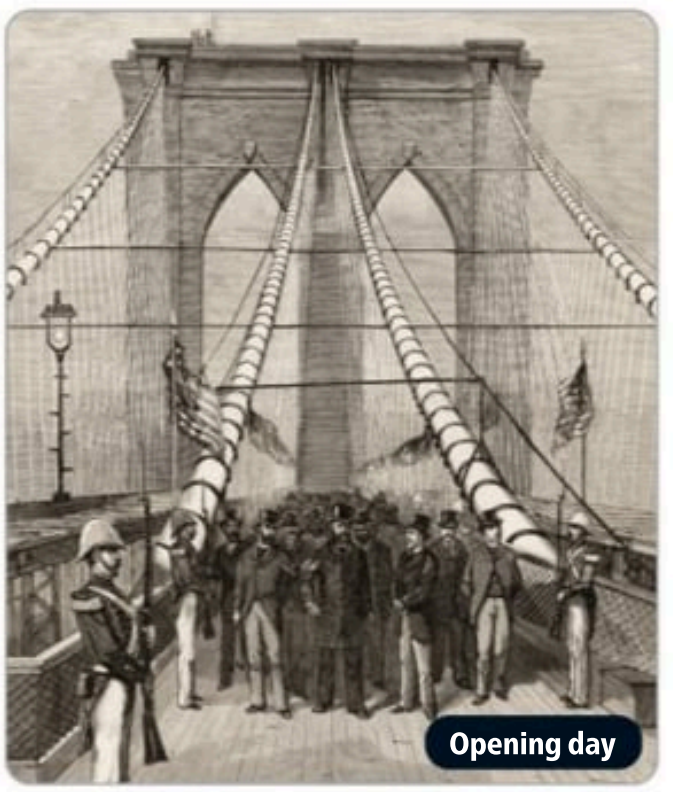
As an architectural icon, the Brooklyn Bridge has been a setting for many films. In the 1988 Disney animated movie *Oliver & Company*, an epic chase scene ends on the bridge. In another animated film—*The Secret Life of Pets* from 2016—a Jack Russell terrier named Max finds himself in a tricky situation on the bridge until Gidget, a fluffy white Pomeranian, comes to his rescue. In the world of live-action movies, the bridge appears in Disney's *Newsies*, a 1992 musical based on the true story of the 1899 newsboys' strike in New York City. In one scene, the newsboys stand on the bridge gazing at the skyline. In another Disney movie-musical, the 2007 hit film *Enchanted*, Giselle and Edward—who were transported from a fairy-tale world to New York City—take a leisurely stroll across the bridge while Edward enjoys a hot dog.

GETTY IMAGES (3); ALAMY (3); DISNEY (3); ILLUMINATION ENTERTAINMENT

engineering

DID YOU KNOW?
The longest suspension bridge in the world today is the 1915 Çanakkale Bridge in Turkey. It spans nearly 6,637 feet.
POPULAR PLACE
Brooklyn has the highest population—about 2.7 million people—of the five boroughs that make up New York City.

The Brooklyn Bridge, seen from the Manhattan side



Opening day

The bridge opens

A citywide celebration took place on May 24, 1883, to mark the bridge's opening. It was attended by thousands and presided over by US President Chester A. Arthur and New York Governor Grover Cleveland. Emily Roebling crossed the bridge first, in a horse-drawn carriage from the Brooklyn side and with a rooster in her lap as a symbol of victory. Within 24 hours, an estimated 250,000 people had paid a penny to walk across the bridge. By the mid-1900s, transportation had evolved and the Brooklyn Bridge needed to be able to accommodate more motor vehicles. A reconstruction project took place from 1944 to 1954. The rail and trolley tracks were removed to add more driving lanes, bringing the total to six.

A view of Manhattan

A historic landmark

The Brooklyn Bridge was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1964 and a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark in 1972. In 2021, the bridge received another update with the opening of a new two-way protected bike lane to accommodate the growing popularity of cycling in the city. Today, the bridge spans 6,016 feet and is free to cross. With its stunning views in both directions, the bridge provides passage to more than 100,000 vehicles, nearly 30,000 pedestrians, and about 5,000 cyclists each day.

A majestic network of

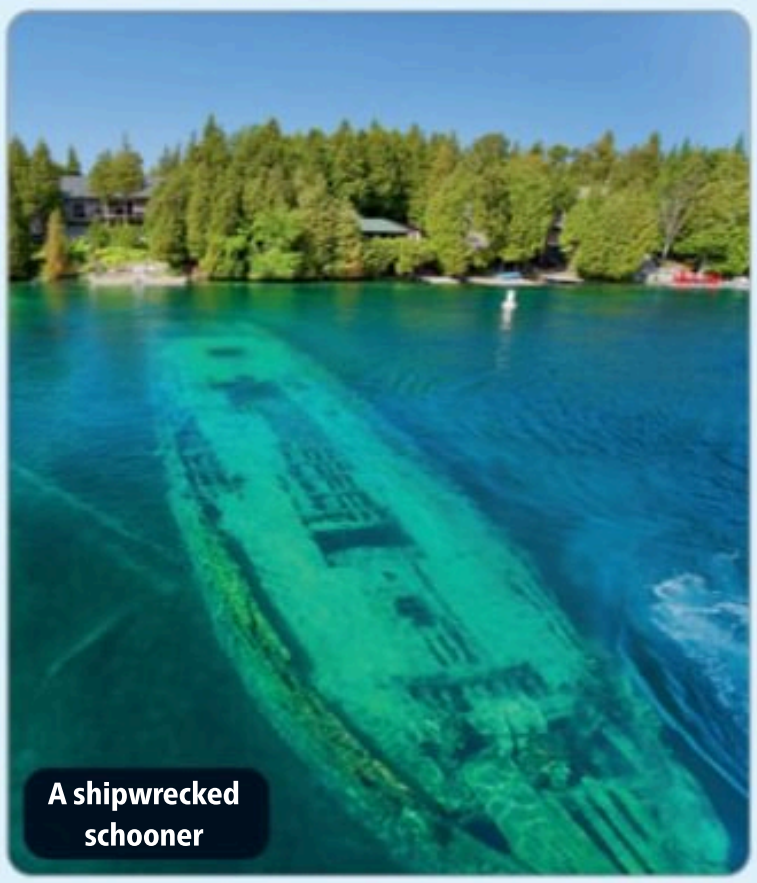
Five lakes in North America make up the largest freshwater system in the world.

The Great Lakes are a group of five lakes—Superior, Huron, Michigan, Erie, and Ontario—in the northern US near the Canadian border. They stretch for 94,000 square miles across eight US states—Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. The lakes make up about 84% of North America's surface freshwater and are a source of drinking water for more than 30 million people. Thanks to the lakes' five main ports—Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Duluth, and Milwaukee—they also help support the US economy as a key transportation route to move goods. Let's find out more about these significant bodies of water.

MEMORY TRICK
An acronym to remember the five lakes—Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior—is HOMES.

WOW!
Mackinac Island on Lake Huron is a car-free town where people travel in horse-drawn carriages, by bike, or on foot.

The wooded Minnesota coastline of Lake Superior



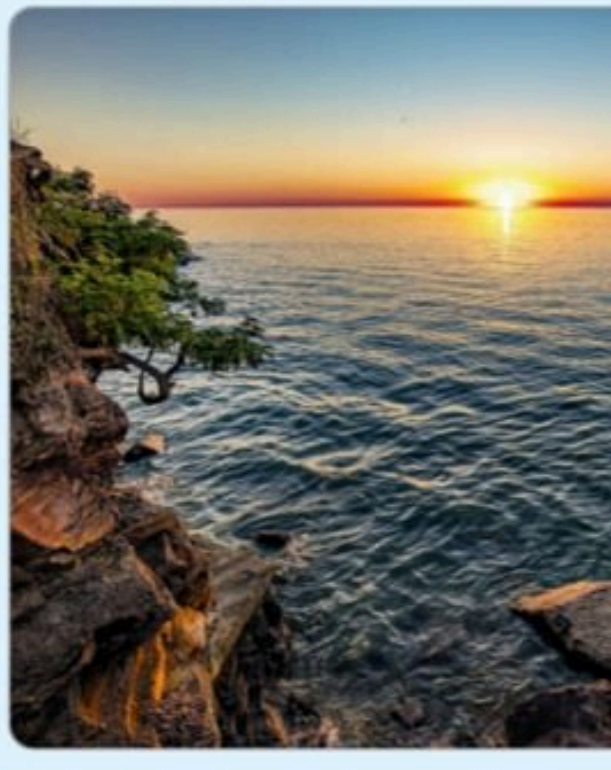
A shipwrecked schooner

Lake Huron

By surface area, Lake Huron is the second-largest Great Lake and the world's fifth-largest lake. It is surrounded by Michigan and Ontario, Canada, and has the longest shoreline of any lake in the world when its 30,000 islands are included. Of these, Manitoulin Island is the world's largest freshwater island and has about 108 lakes of its own. Lake Huron was once feared for its storms and dangerous sailing conditions. Today, the 4,300-square-mile Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary protects almost 100 historic shipwrecks off Huron's coast. The ships range from wooden schooners to steamers, with the oldest dating back to the mid-1800s. The area is often referred to as "shipwreck alley."

Lake Erie

The warmest Great Lake is Erie, which attracts migratory birds. In fact, part of the Lake Erie basin is nicknamed the "warbler capital of the world" and attracts close to 100,000 visitors every spring. It is also the shallowest lake, which makes it more prone to freezing in the winter. The lake is surrounded by Ontario in Canada and Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York in the US. In the 1960s, Lake Erie experienced severe water pollution and was thought to be dying. And it still faces algal blooms that are harmful to aquatic life and to nearby residents who depend on the lake for drinking water. But thanks to joint efforts by Canada and the US, water quality has improved significantly over the decades.



SHUTTERSTOCK (2); GETTY IMAGES (3)

waterways

Lake Superior

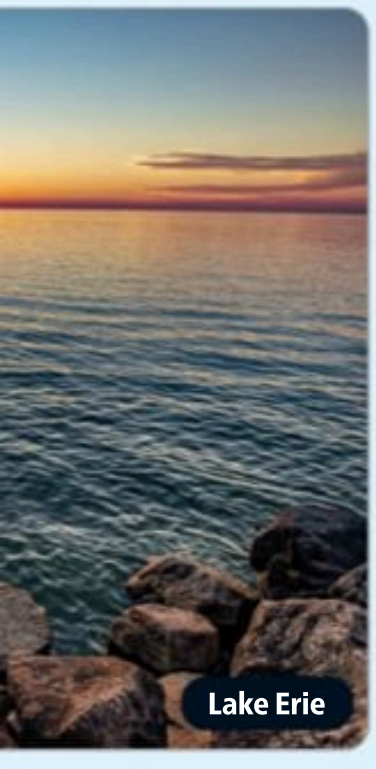
With a surface area of 31,700 square miles, Lake Superior is the largest of the Great Lakes and the biggest freshwater lake in the world. It's also the coldest and deepest of the Great Lakes, plunging up to 1,332 feet. Bordered by Ontario, Canada, to its north and east, Minnesota to its west, and Wisconsin and Michigan to its south, Superior has a shoreline of about 2,800 miles. Within the lake is Isle Royale National Park, made up of one large island and more than 400 smaller ones and accessible only by boat or seaplane. Wolves, moose, and western painted turtles live there.

WILD WATERS
More than 3,500 species of plants and animals live in the Great Lakes region.

Manistique East Breakwater Lighthouse

Lake Michigan

The only Great Lake that is entirely in the US, bordering Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, and Indiana, is Lake Michigan. It's also the third-largest lake by surface area and has two major metropolitan areas in its basin—Chicago, Illinois, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The lake has coastal wetlands, boreal forests, oak savannas, more than 700 islands, and the largest freshwater dune system in the world. The Indiana Dunes National Park stretches across 15 miles of the lake's shoreline and provides a home for a variety of wildlife, including 60 butterfly species and 46 mammal species. Lake Michigan also features more than 50 lighthouses, the most among the five lakes. In the north, it meets Lake Huron through the Straits of Mackinac in Michigan.



Lake Erie

Lake Ontario

The smallest of the Great Lakes in surface area, Lake Ontario holds almost four times the water of Lake Erie. It is bound by Ontario, Canada, to its north and New York to its south. Water from the other four lakes flows into Ontario, which features several sights that attract visitors as well as scientists. Lake Erie makes its way into Lake Ontario through the Niagara River, which flows over the iconic Niagara Falls. The lake is also famous for its ice volcanoes that form in the winter. In 2025, Ontario drew attention from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration experts and University of Rhode Island students, who set out on a mission to create 3D digital models of 17 shipwrecks in the region.

Niagara Falls

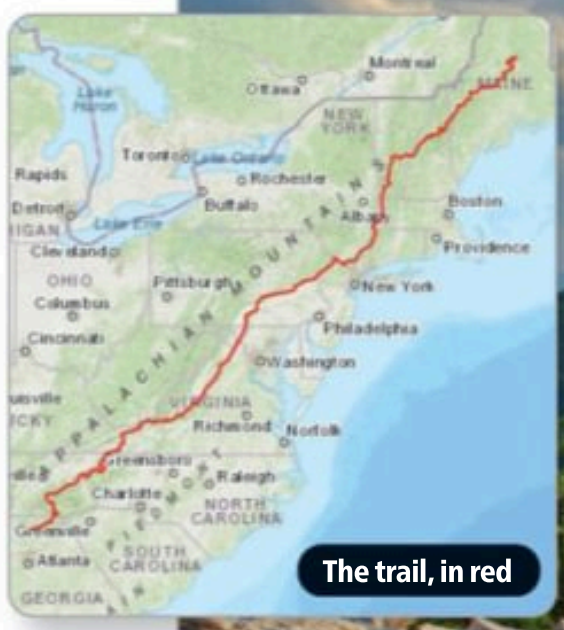
Thousands of miles in

An adventurous trail in the eastern US draws hikers from across the globe.

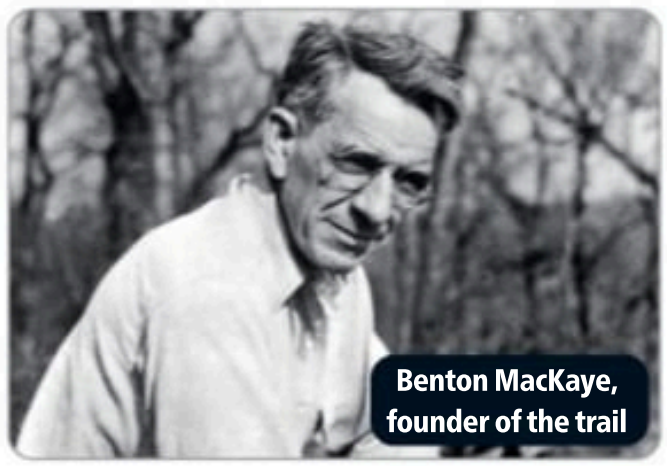
Every year, an estimated 3 million people visit the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. It started with one man's vision.

What is the Appalachian Trail?

Stretching for more than 2,190 miles, the Appalachian Trail is the longest hiking-only footpath in the world. The trail follows the ridgeline of the Appalachian Mountains, spanning 14 states from Georgia to Maine, eight national forests, and six national parks. The trail is a protected part of the National Park System, which refers to the trail as the "footpath for the people." The Appalachian Trail, which today is also known to hikers by its nickname, "the AT," was founded more than 100 years ago.



The trail, in red


Benton MacKaye, founder of the trail

How it began

The idea for the trail came from Benton MacKaye, a land-use planner from Massachusetts who became known as "the father of the Appalachian Trail." One day while hiking Vermont's Stratton Mountain, he imagined a walking path in the eastern US where city dwellers could explore nature. In 1921, he presented his ideas in an article. The hope, he wrote, was to build a trail that would allow people "to walk, to see, and to see what you see." The idea took off, and the first section of the AT opened in New York in 1923. In 1925, the Appalachian Trail Conference (now the Appalachian Trail Conservancy or ATC) formed as a joint effort between hiking groups and government agencies to build one trail across many states. In 1937, the AT was complete.

SKY HIGH
The tallest peak on the Appalachian Trail is Kuwohi in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which is 6,643 feet above sea level.

KEEP GOING
Walking the entire Appalachian Trail takes approximately 5 million steps.

Famous hikers

Emma Gatewood

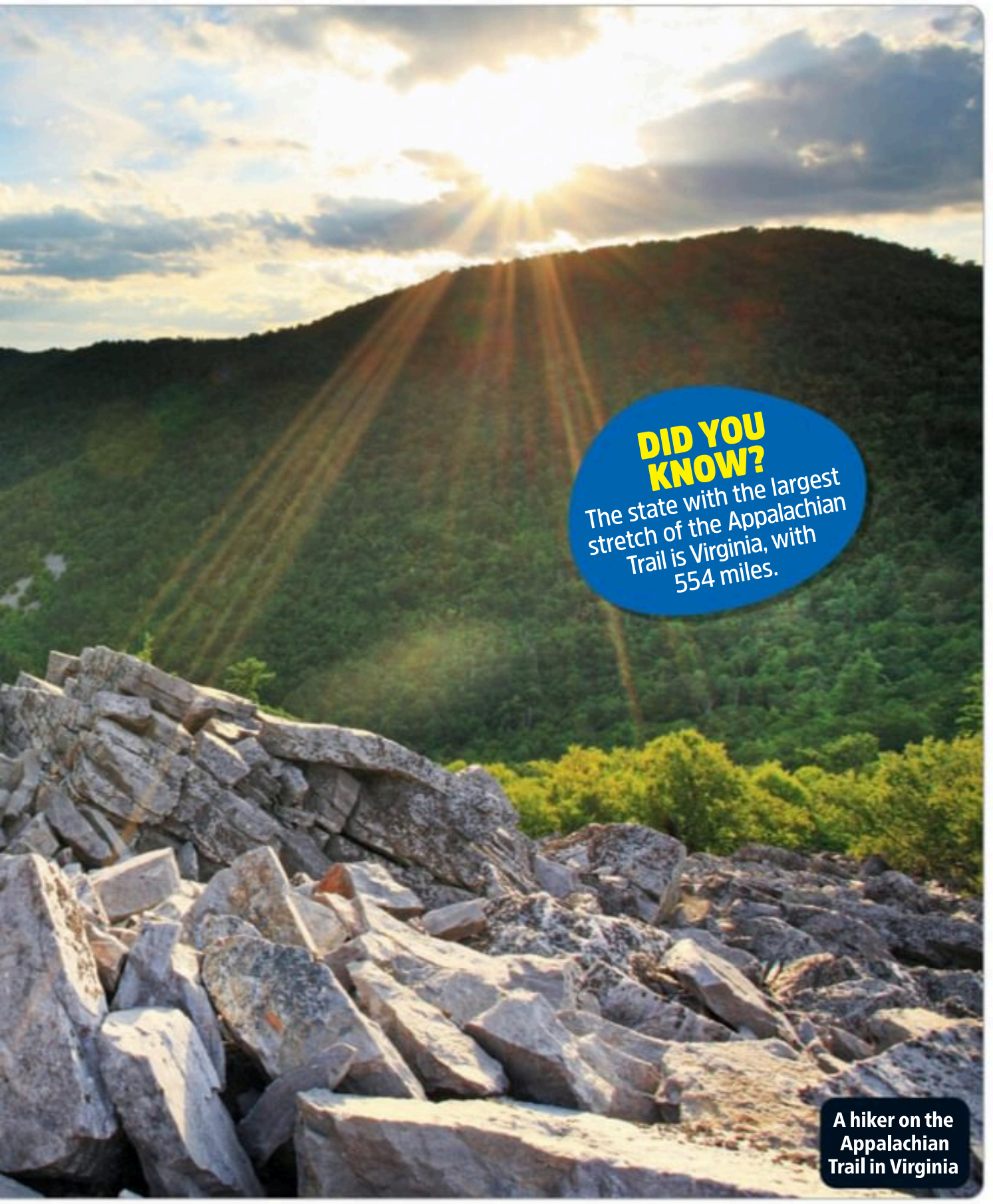
In 1955, at the age of 67, Emma Gatewood became the first woman to thru-hike the AT solo. She later hiked the entire length twice more.

William O. Douglas

Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas was a staunch environmental advocate. In 1967, he led a protest hike to save a pond on the AT in New Jersey from destruction. The Douglas Trail nearby is named for him.

ALAMY; APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE; COURTESY OF APPALACHIAN TRAIL CONSERVANCY; GETTY IMAGES (4); CHRIS GALLAWAY/HORIZONLINE PICTURES; COURTESY OF DEBRA IRWIN; DANIEL WHITE

the mountains



A hiker on the Appalachian Trail in Virginia

Along the trail in Tennessee

Hiking the path

The Appalachian Trail is a challenging climb, featuring rough terrain and tall mountains that reach thousands of feet in elevation. To walk the entire trail within a year is called a "thru-hike." In 1948, World War II veteran Earl Shaffer became the first person to thru-hike the trail, in 124 days. While millions hit the trail each year to hike a section of it, about 3,000 people attempt a thru-hike, which takes an average of five to seven months. About 25% of thru-hikers who try to complete the trail succeed. Along the trail, there are white blazes (trail markers) showing the length of the AT and blue blazes for side trails and stops such as scenic overlooks. There are also towns and areas just off the trail that offer hikers a place to rest, shower, or restock supplies.

A volunteer repair crew

Preserving the trail

As the popularity of hiking the Appalachian Trail has intensified, so has the need to safeguard it. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the National Trails System Act into law in 1968, making the Appalachian Trail the first national scenic trail in the eastern US and putting it under federal protection. Along with the National Park Service and the US Forest Service, the ATC manages the trail. The conservancy's vast network of volunteer groups help to maintain the trail's condition, from clearing away litter to cleaning up damage from rough weather. The ATC has also educated generations of people about the AT and advocated for its protection—all to ensure that MacKaye's vision for the trail remains alive for all to enjoy.

Bill Irwin

Without maps or a compass, Bill Irwin became the first blind hiker to complete the AT, in 1990, led only by his guide dog Orient. The two of them famously became known as "The Orient Express."

Daniel White

In 2017, Daniel White, known by his trail name "The Blackalachian," conquered the AT. He has since worked with Great Smoky Mountains National Park to encourage racial diversity in the outdoors.

A mighty voyage

A route through the heartland is one of the world's major river systems.

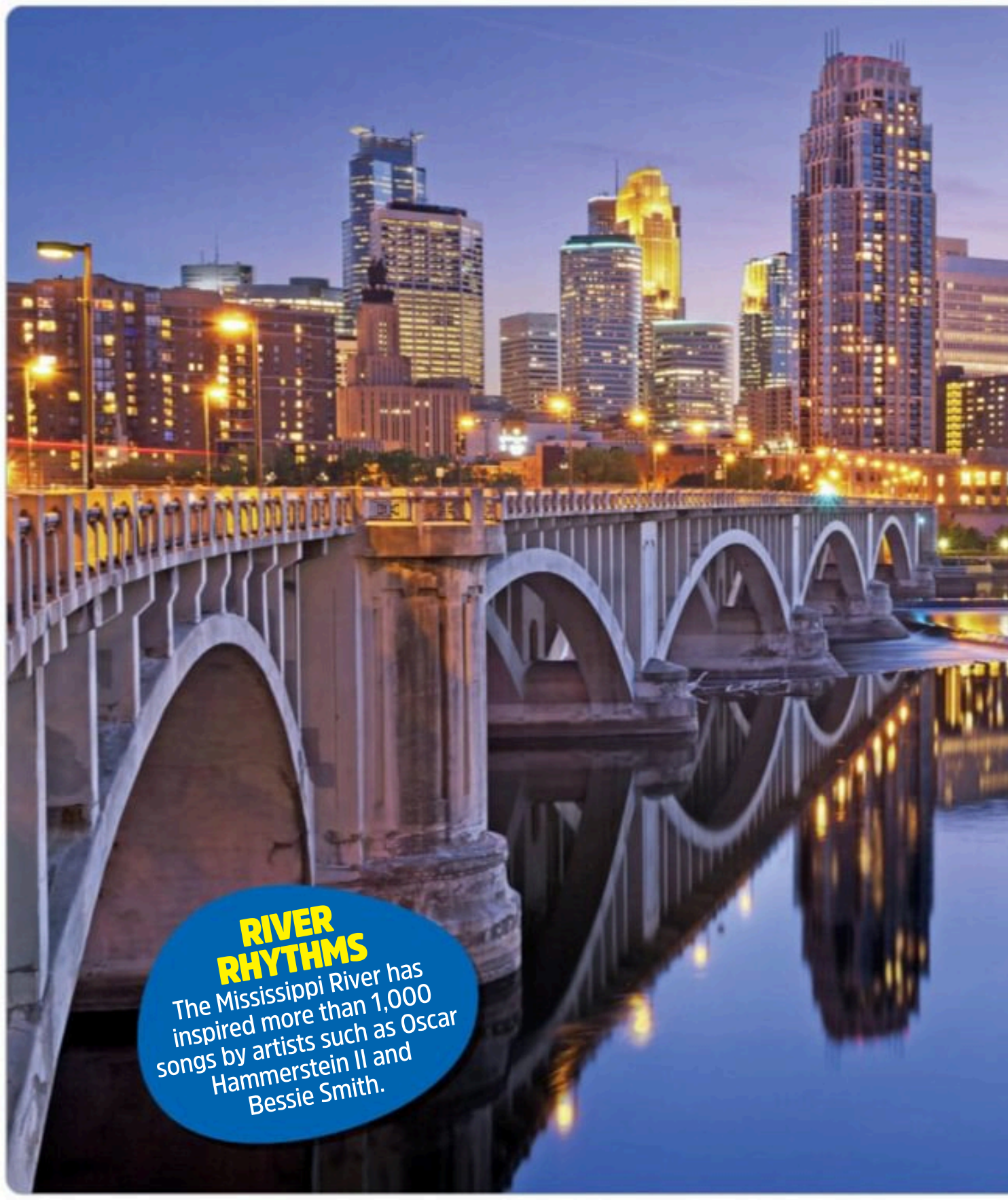
The winding Mississippi River spans about 2,350 miles and holds an important place in American history and culture.

Facts about the river

Experts believe the Mississippi River started forming about 70 million years ago, when dinosaurs roamed the Earth. It starts in the north at Lake Itasca in Minnesota and travels south to the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana. The river has many tributaries (smaller river that meets a larger one), including the Missouri River and the Ohio River. When combined with the Missouri River, the Mississippi is the longest river in North America.

Early history

Native Americans and their ancestors have lived in the area around the river for centuries. The arrival of Europeans in the 16th century brought disease, displacement, and the enslavement of the local population. It also led to a power struggle among the French, British, and Spanish over the river and adjoining lands. France sold the region to the US in 1803 under the Louisiana Purchase, expanding the nation's borders west of the Mississippi River. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 and other treaties forced Native Americans to give up their ancestral lands to new settlers.



RIVER RHYTHMS
The Mississippi River has inspired more than 1,000 songs by artists such as Oscar Hammerstein II and Bessie Smith.

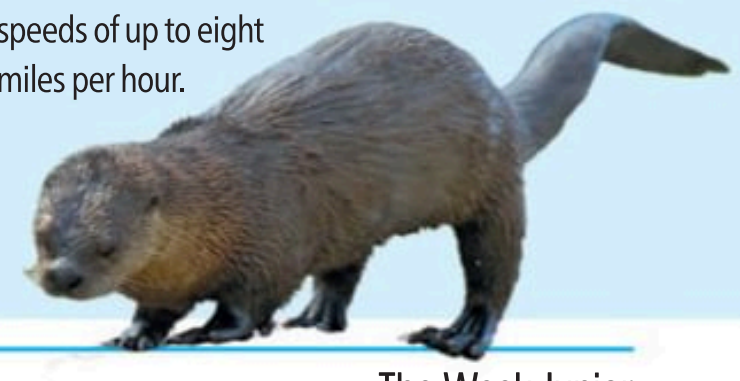
Animals along the Mississippi

Louisiana black bear

This subspecies of the American black bear is Louisiana's official state mammal. It was removed from the endangered species list in 2016.

North American river otter

Once on the brink of extinction because of pollution and trapping, the otter has made a comeback. This fast swimmer can reach speeds of up to eight miles per hour.



GETTY IMAGES (7); SHUTTERSTOCK; ALAMY

through 10 states

UNDER THE SURFACE
About 25% of all fish species in North America live in the Mississippi River.

DID YOU KNOW?
At its narrowest, the river spans 20 to 30 feet. At its widest, it stretches about 11 miles across.

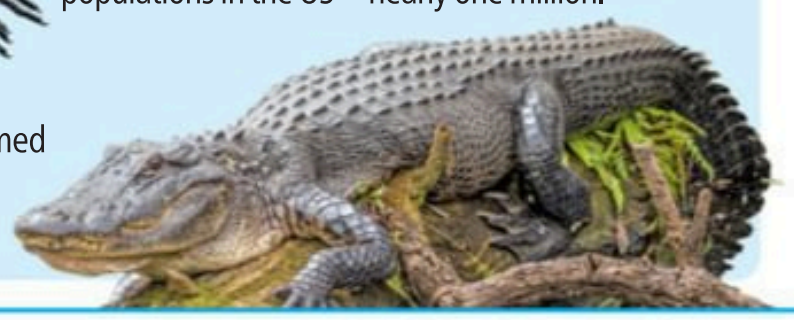
The river crosses 10 states: Minnesota (Minneapolis is pictured here), Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

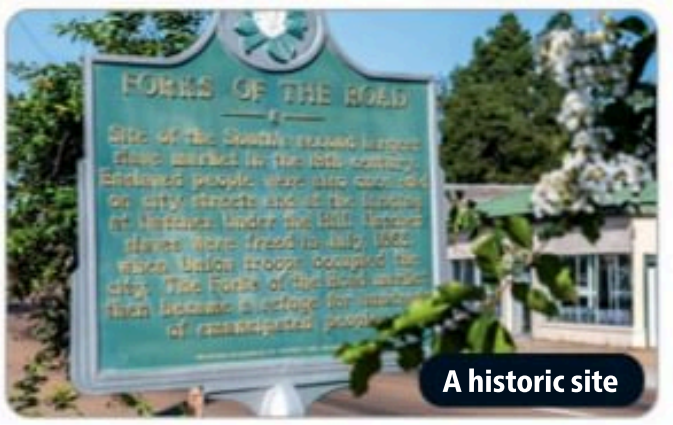
Roseate spoonbill

The "Mississippi Flyway" is one of the most important spring and autumn migratory routes for birds. One that makes this journey is the roseate spoonbill, named for its rose color and long beak that looks like a spoon. It visits the Mississippi Delta in the fall.

American alligator

Measuring between 9 and 13 feet long, the American alligator is one of North America's largest reptiles. Louisiana has one of the largest wild alligator populations in the US—nearly one million.





A historic site

Addressing the past

The Mississippi was a symbol of both oppression and freedom for another group of people—enslaved Africans who were forced to work on cotton, rice, tobacco, and other plantations starting in 1619. They were sold at auctions and then transported on steamboats. The river became an important part of the Underground Railroad, a secret network of people and places that helped enslaved people reach freedom. These experiences led to the creation of original musical genres such as jazz and blues. To try to reckon with the past, Forks of the Road, one of the largest slave markets along the river's route, was recognized as a new national historic site in 2021 and was added to the Natchez National Historical Park in Mississippi.

New Orleans, Louisiana

Protecting a crucial route

Today, the river is a busy commercial waterway that is vital to the US economy. It brings in billions of dollars through tourism, and more than 90% of food products sold to other countries is grown in the Mississippi River basin. The river has more than 40 ports and harbors through which about 60% of the nation's grains are shipped around the world. Millions of people rely on the river for their daily water needs. All this has come at a cost. River traffic and construction have caused erosion and harmed wildlife. Government agencies, environmental groups, and volunteers are working to protect the mighty river for future generations.

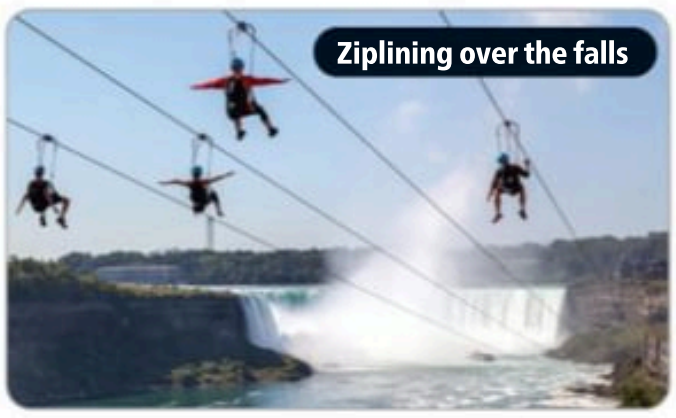
A wondrous, roaring

Find out about the beauty and power of this natural sight.

Located on the border between Ontario, Canada, and western New York state, Niagara Falls is one of the most scenic and stunning waterfalls on Earth. Its towering height and the incredible volume of water thundering over its edge have captivated people for centuries.

A group of three waterfalls

Niagara Falls is actually made up of three separate waterfalls: American Falls, Bridal Veil Falls, and Horseshoe Falls. Horseshoe Falls is the highest and widest. It's 188 feet high and 2,200 feet across, which is longer than six football fields. All three originate in the Niagara River, which is fed by four of the five Great Lakes (Huron, Michigan, Erie, and Superior) and empties into the fifth, Lake Ontario.


Ziplining over the falls

The history of Niagara Falls

The falls were created by glacier activity about 12,000 years ago. In 1678, French explorer Louis Hennepin was the first European to see Niagara Falls. Moved by its power and beauty, he published an account of his travels, bringing the natural wonder to the world's attention. In the 1800s, the growing US rail system made it a prime destination for world travelers.

DID YOU KNOW?
The water below Niagara Falls is about 170 feet deep. That's about the same height as the rock walls around it.

Horseshoe Falls

Daredevils over the falls

For more than 165 years, Niagara Falls has attracted adventurers. Many tightrope walkers have braved the high winds and drenching mists to make their way across the Niagara River. The trip takes about 25 minutes.

Charles Blondin

This French acrobat made the first crossing in 1859 on a rope two inches around. He crossed about 300 more times after that—on a bike, pushing a wheelbarrow, and with a man on his back.

Maria Spelterini

The only woman to walk over the falls was Maria Spelterini. In 1876, at age 23, she made five trips and did it differently each time: with weights on her feet, blindfolded, with her hands and feet bound together, and walking backward.

GETTY IMAGES (7); ALAMY; REUTERS; FRANCIS J. PETRIE PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

waterfall

The heroine of Niagara Falls

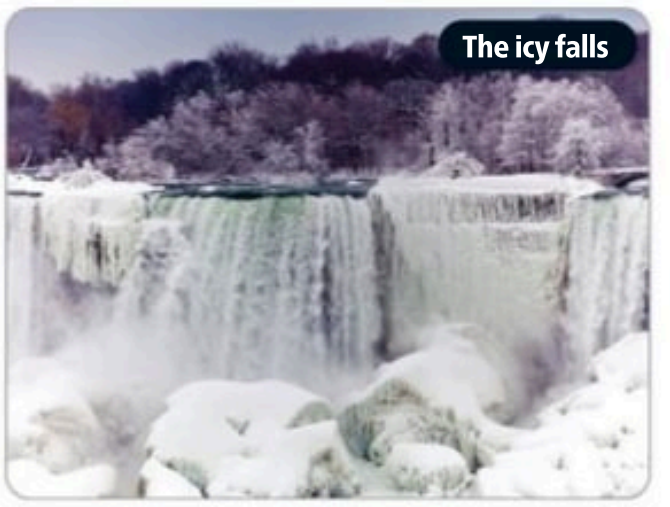
In 1901, Annie Edson Taylor was the first person to take the plunge over the falls. The 63-year-old former teacher rode over the edge in a barrel she designed herself. The vessel was four and a half feet long, made of wood with iron straps around it, and padded with a mattress. Taylor survived the nearly 160-foot drop and earned the nickname "the heroine of Niagara Falls." She wrote a book about her experience. Today, anyone who attempts the illegal and extremely dangerous feat faces a steep fine and must pay for the cost of rescue.

WOW!
Each year, more than 1.5 million people wear rain ponchos on boat rides that take them very close to the falls. Every blue poncho gets recycled!

Nik Wallenda

In 2012, Nik Wallenda walked across in front of a huge crowd, with millions more watching on TV. Wallenda, who comes from a family of daredevils, handed his passport to Canadian officials on the other side.

Wallenda after his triumph


The icy falls

Do the falls really freeze in winter?

Although photographs of the falls taken in winter make it seem as if the waterfalls are frozen solid, they're not. The outer layer of the falling water freezes, but behind that, the water continues to flow. Ice did cause the falls to stop flowing for 30 hours in March 1848, however. An ice jam reduced the roar to a trickle, creating an eerie silence until the water finally broke through.

Turning water into power

Niagara Falls is among the highest-flowing waterfalls in the world: More than 700,000 gallons of water flow per second during summer and fall. The Niagara River has been harnessed for hydroelectric power as far back as the late 1800s. Hydroelectric power uses the energy created by the flow of water to generate electricity. Today, the falls generate enough electricity to light up 3.8 million homes.

Visitors on a boat ride

Friendly rivalry

The falls can be accessed from both the US and Canada, and there's a longstanding, friendly debate over which side is better. On both sides, visitors can see the falls, stroll around for free, or pay to take boat rides that offer close-up views. The most panoramic views are on the Canadian side, which is busier and more commercial. The American side, home to the first US state park, is quieter and has more green space. Visitors who can't decide can cross the Rainbow Bridge over the Niagara River and see both sides.

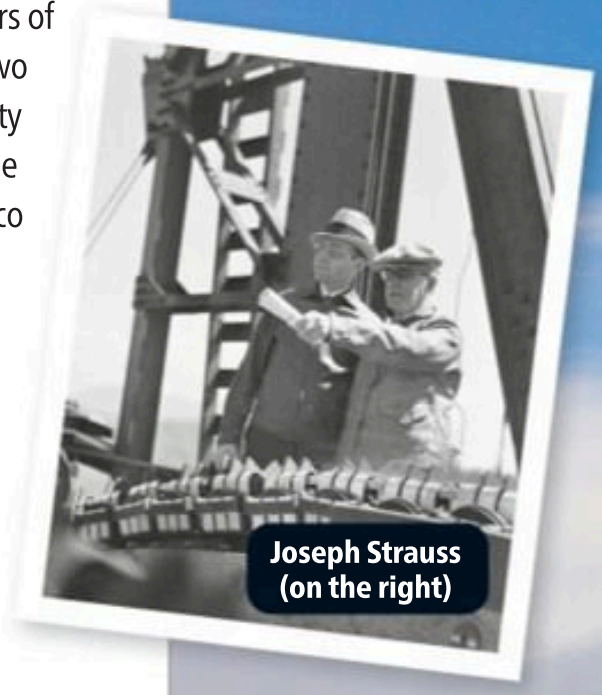
The most colorful

Discover the story behind this distinctive architectural triumph.

The Golden Gate Bridge, located in California, is known as one of the seven wonders of the modern world. It stretches almost two miles from San Francisco to Marin County across the Golden Gate Strait, a one-mile channel of water where the San Francisco Bay meets the Pacific Ocean.

Why was the bridge built?

In the 1930s, San Francisco was growing quickly. Local leaders wanted to build a bridge that would connect the booming city with areas to the north, which at the time were served only by ferry boats.



Joseph Strauss (on the right)

Designing a world wonder

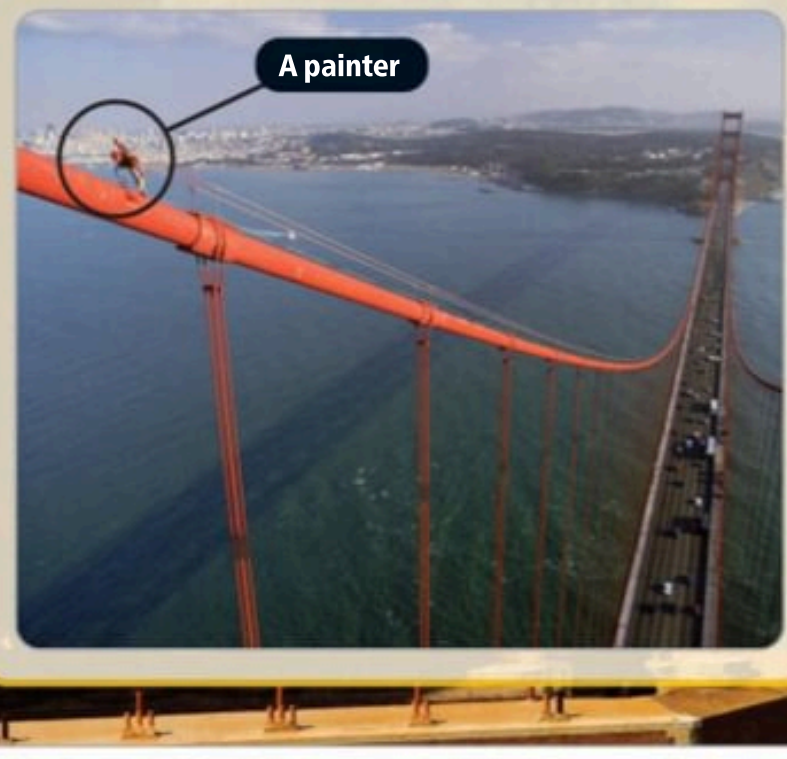
An engineer named Joseph B. Strauss oversaw the Golden Gate Bridge project, leading a team of experts who designed it and the thousands of workers who built it. Construction got underway in 1933. The bridge opened to pedestrians on May 27, 1937, and to cars the next day.

Strength and style

When it was built, the Golden Gate Bridge was the longest bridge in the world. It is a suspension bridge, which means the road is held up by large cables. Suspension bridges are very strong, but they are also flexible. The design allows them to safely vibrate and move so the bridge doesn't get damaged in high winds. The bridge survived an earthquake while it was being built and another major one in 1989. The most special feature of the bridge may be that it's painted a color called International Orange. The warm color was chosen to blend in with the natural beauty around it and to be visible to passing ships, even through the heavy fog that is common in San Francisco.

Golden Gate Bridge International Orange

WOW! The bridge weighs 887,000 tons—about as much as 107,000 male African elephants.



A painter

Painting the bridge

The bridge's iconic orange paint isn't just for looks. It also protects the steel from rusting in the salty sea air. That makes painting it the most important maintenance job on the bridge, and the task never ends. The entire bridge is continuously touched up by a team of more than 30 painters who scale the structure year-round wearing ropes, helmets, and safety harnesses.

GETTY IMAGES (5); ALAMY

bridge in America

The bridge in progress

DID YOU KNOW?
Between 32 million and 34 million vehicles cross the Golden Gate Bridge every year.

Defying danger and doubt

Many people said it was too dangerous and expensive to build a bridge over the rough waters. Strong tides, wind, fog, and salt air all made construction difficult, but Strauss insisted it was possible. Divers laid the foundation more than 90 feet down in the murky water. More than 700 feet up on the towers, crews braved cold temperatures and 70-mile-per-hour winds.

Jobs for the unemployed

Despite the danger, there was no shortage of workers. The bridge was built during the Great Depression, a period from 1929 to the late 1930s when many people were unemployed. Workers included former store clerks, farmers, and taxi drivers. They completed the project on time and on budget. The total cost was about $35 million, which bridge authorities say is more than $1.5 billion in today's dollars.

The bridge in modern times

Each year, more than 10 million people from all over the world visit the Golden Gate Bridge. More than 112,000 vehicles drive across it each day, and at least three babies have been born in cars on it. The bridge has also been the site of many political protests and movie shoots. People can walk or ride a bike across, but no skateboards, roller skates, or inline skates are allowed.

A journey of courage

The Harriet Tubman Byway is a self-guided tour through history.

Near America's Atlantic Coast, one route tells the story of a woman who dared to make a difference—and the people whose lives were forever changed by her bravery.

Harriet Tubman

Who was Harriet Tubman?

In 1822, in Dorchester County, Maryland, Araminta Ross was born into slavery. From about the age of 5, Ross and her eight siblings were forced to work in white people's homes and fields. After marrying a free man and changing her name to Harriet Tubman, she escaped from her enslavers in 1849 and settled in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The following year, she returned to free some of her relatives and became a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad, helping others escape. By the time of her death at age 91 in 1913, Tubman had also served as a military spy, worked to abolish slavery, and advocated for women's right to vote.

Escaping slavery on the Underground Railroad

A passage to freedom

While slavery was legal in the southern US through 1865, a network of people and safe spaces known as the Underground Railroad secretly helped enslaved people flee to freedom in the north, where slavery had been almost entirely abolished by 1830. People risked their lives on these journeys, traveling at night to avoid detection and capture. Conductors like Tubman guided people along the routes and shared information about where to find shelter and food. An estimated 25,000 to 50,000 enslaved people escaped to freedom this way.

SPECIAL SIGHTS

The Federal Highway Administration has designated the byway one of the best driving tours in the nation.

These four photos depict scenes along the byway. Here, a mural at the Harriet Tubman Museum and Educational Center.

The Dorchester County Courthouse, where enslaved people were once auctioned

Must-see stops

Bucktown General Store

People can tour this store in Maryland (right), where Tubman, at age 12, refused to help an enslaver stop an enslaved man from escaping. The enslaver threw an iron weight that hit her in the head, causing a lifelong injury.

Linchester Mill

In Tubman's time, this mill in Maryland (right) was a hub of activity. Free and enslaved Black people worked together at the mill, and white Quakers living nearby provided information and support to freedom-seekers passing through the area.

ALAMY (6); GETTY IMAGES (2); VWPICS VIA AP IMAGES; HARRIET TUBMAN BYWAY; PRESERVATION MARYLAND

and freedom

HARRIET TUBMAN
THE "MOSES OF HER PEOPLE" HARRIET TUBMAN OF THE BUCKTOWN DISTRICT FOUND FREEDOM FOR HERSELF AND SOME THREE HUNDRED OTHER SLAVES WHOM SHE LED NORTH. IN THE CIVIL WAR SHE SERVED THE UNION ARMY AS A NURSE, SCOUT AND SPY.
One of the sites

The Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, a hiding place for enslaved people seeking freedom

HEROIC ACTIONS
In approximately 13 total journeys, Harriet Tubman brought about 70 people to freedom and instructed many others who traveled on their own.

An exhibit at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center

Following a footpath

Hundreds of people seeking freedom followed an old Native American footpath next to the Choptank River. Today, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway re-creates that route and brings Tubman's story to life in a self-guided driving tour that winds through Maryland for 125 miles and Delaware for 98 miles before crossing into Pennsylvania. The byway has 45 designated stops that preserve locations where Tubman lived and worked, sites dedicated to her, and places of importance to Black American history. These include Brodess Farm, where Tubman spent much of her childhood, and the visitor center of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park, which features exhibits about Tubman's life.

How to travel the byway

The best place to start is in Cambridge, Maryland, where staff working at the Dorchester County Visitor Center can provide help with trip planning. Following the byway through the landscapes and waterscapes of Maryland's Eastern Shore and into Delaware and Pennsylvania can take a few hours or a few days. The natural landscapes along the route look similar to the way they did during Tubman's time, so visitors can see what she and other freedom-seekers might have encountered during their courageous journeys. People can explore the route at their own pace and stop at as many sites as they wish. A printable driving guide and map, an audio guide that brings powerful stories from Tubman's time to life, and information about arranging guided tours are available online.

Tubman-Garrett Riverfront Park

This park in Delaware honors Tubman and Thomas Garrett, an Underground Railroad agent who helped about 2,700 people escape slavery. Once, when a group led by Tubman was stuck hiding from slave catchers, Garrett sent a wagon to smuggle them through.

A statue of Tubman and Thomas Garrett

A striking structure

This monument was built to honor westward growth in the 1800s.

Soaring 630 feet over the Mississippi River, the shiny Gateway Arch is the tallest monument in the US and the tallest arch in the world. Built between 1963 and 1965, it's the main attraction of the 91-acre Gateway Arch National Park in St. Louis, Missouri. An average of 2 million people visit the arch each year, and 1 million of them go all the way to the lookout at the top.

History of the memorial

In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson completed the Louisiana Purchase, buying land from France that nearly doubled the size of the US. St. Louis was part of the purchase. In 1804, the city became famous as the starting point for the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark set out to create maps of the new US land for Jefferson. In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt wanted to honor Jefferson's vision. He designated property in St. Louis to become a memorial.

Eero Saarinen with a model of the arch

The winning design

A competition was announced in 1947 to determine what the memorial should look like. The man who won the contest was a US architect named Eero Saarinen. He had the idea for the large arch shape. His father, Eliel Saarinen, was also a famous architect and had entered the competition. At first there was a mix-up, and Eliel was told that he had won the contest. When the error was corrected, the father opened a bottle of champagne to congratulate his son.

LOOK OUT!
The viewing area at the top of the Gateway Arch can hold up to 160 people at a time.

OPTICAL ILLUSION
Although it looks taller than it is wide, the Gateway Arch is both 630 feet high and 630 feet wide.

SAFE STRIKES
Hundreds of lightning bolts strike the arch each year. It doesn't get damaged because lightning rods at the top protect it.

3 memorable moments

The Gateway Arch has been the site of important and thrilling moments. In 1992, a daredevil climbed to the top using suction cups and safely parachuted down. Here are three more historical events that occurred there.

A call for equality

In 1964, before the arch was finished, civil rights activists Percy Green and Richard Daly climbed 125 feet up the arch. They were protesting the lack of Black people working on it. At left, a supervisor in the elevator tries to persuade them to come down.

GETTY IMAGES (6); AP; ALAMY; MANUSCRIPTS & ARCHIVES, YALE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY. COURTESY OF ADFF; COURTESY SCOTT CAPLAN

in St. Louis

Gateway Arch by the numbers

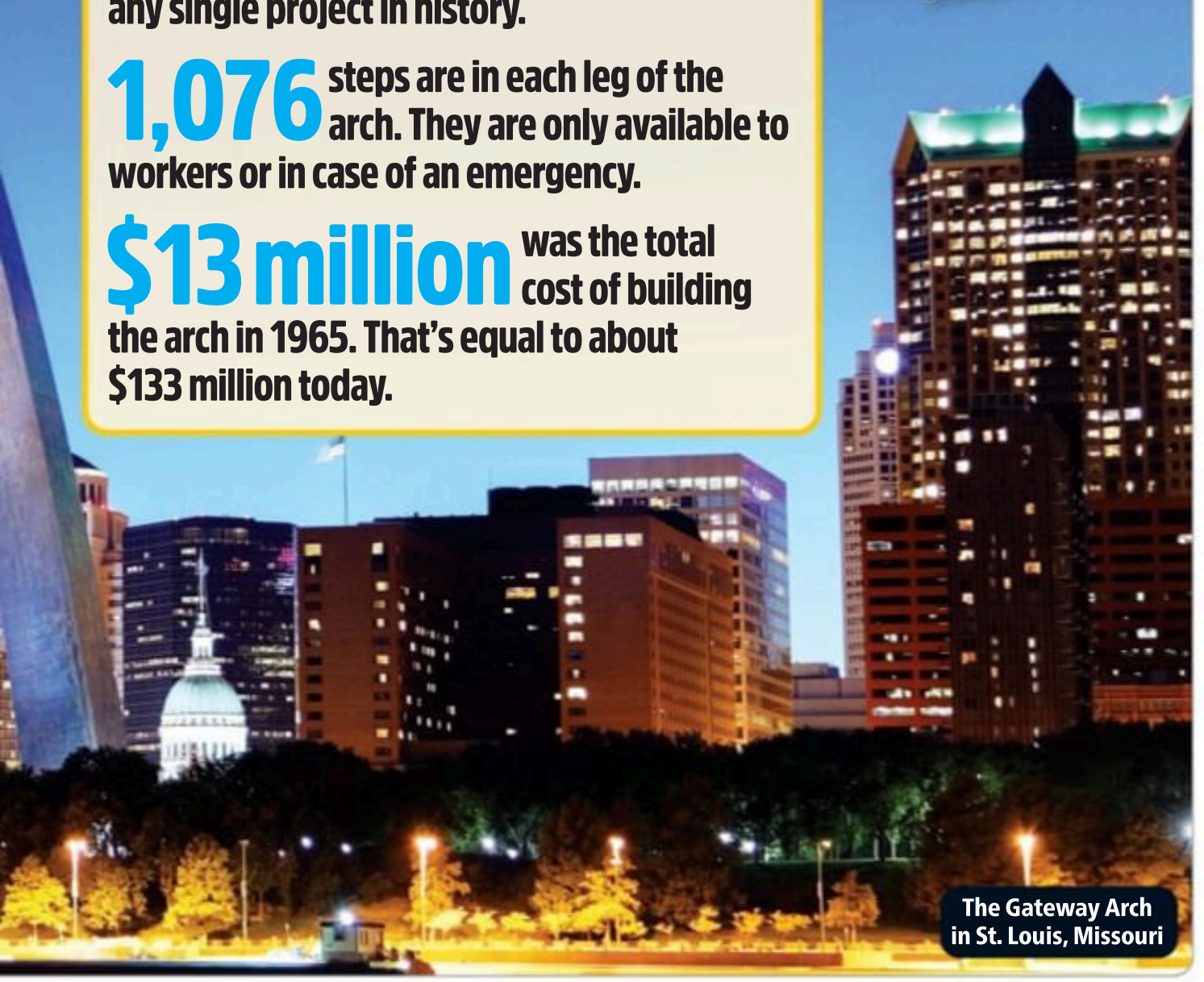
17,246 tons is the total weight of the arch.

23,570 tons of concrete was used to embed each leg of the arch.

900 tons of stainless steel was used to build the arch—the most used in any single project in history.

1,076 steps are in each leg of the arch. They are only available to workers or in case of an emergency.

$13 million was the total cost of building the arch in 1965. That's equal to about $133 million today.


The Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Missouri

Dwight Eisenhower

A surprise visit

In 1967, former President Dwight Eisenhower visited the arch. US Presidents aren't allowed at the top because the space is too tight to include the Secret Service agents that protect them. Because he signed the order to begin the arch's construction in 1954, he insisted on going up.

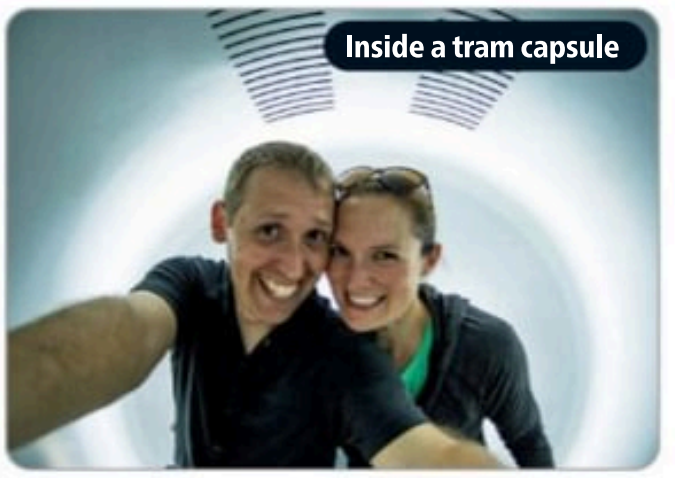
A hot-air balloon first

Nikki Caplan became the first person to legally fly a hot-air balloon through the arch in 1973. Her balloon touched one of the legs of the arch while passing through. Since the arch is covered in smooth metal, there was no damage to the balloon or the arch.

The arch in progress

Challenges to construction

In 1963, construction started, beginning with the arch's two bases. For two years, workers put large stainless steel sections on top of each other to build up each side of the arch. The question was whether the two parts would correctly join together when they reached each other at the top. There was good reason to be nervous: According to calculations, they couldn't be more than 1/64 of an inch apart from each other if they were to fit together. When the big day came in 1965 to put the last pieces in place, everyone was relieved when the two halves fit together.


Inside a tram capsule

Visiting the arch

People can ride to the top in an egg-shaped capsule that operates on a tram. Each capsule is five feet wide and can hold five passengers for the four-minute ride. At the top, a viewing room has windows on both sides. On clear days, visitors can see up to 30 miles away. An updated museum at the base tells the stories of people who lived during the time of the Louisiana Purchase. In one exhibit, viewers learn about Samantha Packwood, a 9-year-old girl who rode a mule west with her family. The museum also shows how US exploration affected Indigenous people who were already living in the West. Many people from Native American tribes lost their homes and their lives as the US settled the land.

A scenic ocean drive

The Pacific Coast Highway draws millions of visitors each year.

The Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) is a stunning route along the coast of California. Travelers can enjoy breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean as they drive through quaint seaside towns and keep an eye out for wildlife.

A sign on the route

What is the Pacific Coast Highway?

Stretching for 656 miles, PCH, also known as California State Route 1, officially begins at Capistrano Beach in Dana Point, California, about 60 miles south of Los Angeles. It ends in Leggett, which is a few hours south of the state's border with Oregon. Driving the entire length of PCH takes at least 12 hours, although people tend to drive the long, winding highway more slowly so they can enjoy the views and destinations along the route.

Horse teams clear land for the road.

Construction begins

In the early 1900s, roads along the West Coast were disconnected, which made it difficult to travel from one town to another. The idea for one road along California's coast that would make its scenic beauty accessible to everyone came from a businessman named Samuel Hill. A local landowner and physician, John L. D. Roberts, worked with the state government to get funding for the road, and building began in 1921.

FREE WAY
There is only one toll on the Pacific Coast Highway, when crossing San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge heading south.

BIG BANG
Construction of PCH required 70,000 pounds of dynamite to blast through sandstone, granite, and marble along the route.

The Bixby Bridge in Big Sur is considered the most famous of the 33 bridges along PCH.

Famous sights along the way

Redwood National and State Parks

The northern end of PCH meets Redwood Highway, which features some of the oldest and tallest trees on Earth.

Pigeon Point Lighthouse

At 115 feet high, Pigeon Point is one of the tallest lighthouses in the US. Located about 50 miles south of San Francisco, it uses an LED light to help ships navigate the coast.

GETTY IMAGES

in California

DID YOU KNOW?
Californians refer to the Pacific Coast Highway as "the 1," which is short for Route 1.

Sea lions

Becoming a destination

Building PCH took about 15 years and cost about $10 million, with the first sections of the road opening in the late 1920s. For Californians, PCH represented the first direct route between coastal cities like Ventura and Santa Monica. By 1941, Californians referred to the road as the Pacific Coast Highway, with the name becoming official in 1964. Sections of PCH passing Big Sur and San Luis Obispo have been designated All-American Roads or National Scenic Byways. Thousands of cars travel every day on some of the most popular stretches, such as those in Malibu and Monterey, with higher numbers in the summer as tourists arrive to make the famous drive and to catch a glimpse of sea lions, elephant seals, and surfers.

A vintage vehicle on the highway

Protecting an American treasure

Landslides closed a long stretch of the Pacific Coast Highway along the rugged Big Sur coast in 2023 and 2024. In early 2025, the Palisades Fire shut down about 11 miles of road between Santa Monica and the Pacific Palisades and Malibu areas. In January 2026, after extensive repairs, the entire highway was open for the first time in three years. Studies show that rising sea levels and stronger storms mean improvements are needed. California is investing in repairing slopes and improving drainage to protect the roadway from future landslides, wildfires, and erosion, keeping PCH safe and enjoyable for years to come.

Hearst Castle

Built in 1919 in San Simeon, the 165-room Hearst Castle was the grand home of publisher William Randolph Hearst. Zebras from the property's former zoo can be seen from PCH.

Santa Monica Pier

The Santa Monica Pier has been a California attraction since 1909. The National Historic Landmark features food vendors, carnival games, and rides, including a famous Ferris wheel.

GETTY IMAGES

Our celebrations and special events

48 The Super Bowl
50 The Westminster Dog Show
52 Groundhog Day
54 March Madness
56 Earth Day
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62 State Fairs

Football's biggest day

Learn about the exciting history of America's favorite sporting event.

The Super Bowl is one of the most-watched athletic competitions every year, drawing millions of viewers across the United States and around the world.

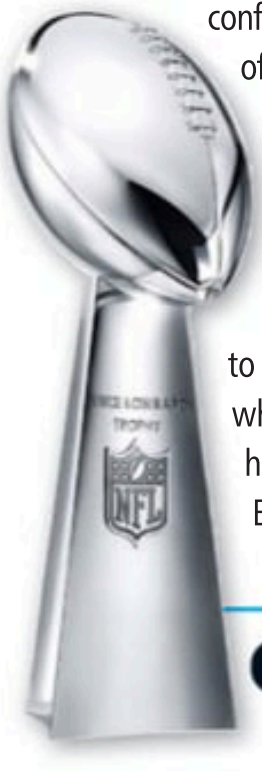
The first Super Bowl

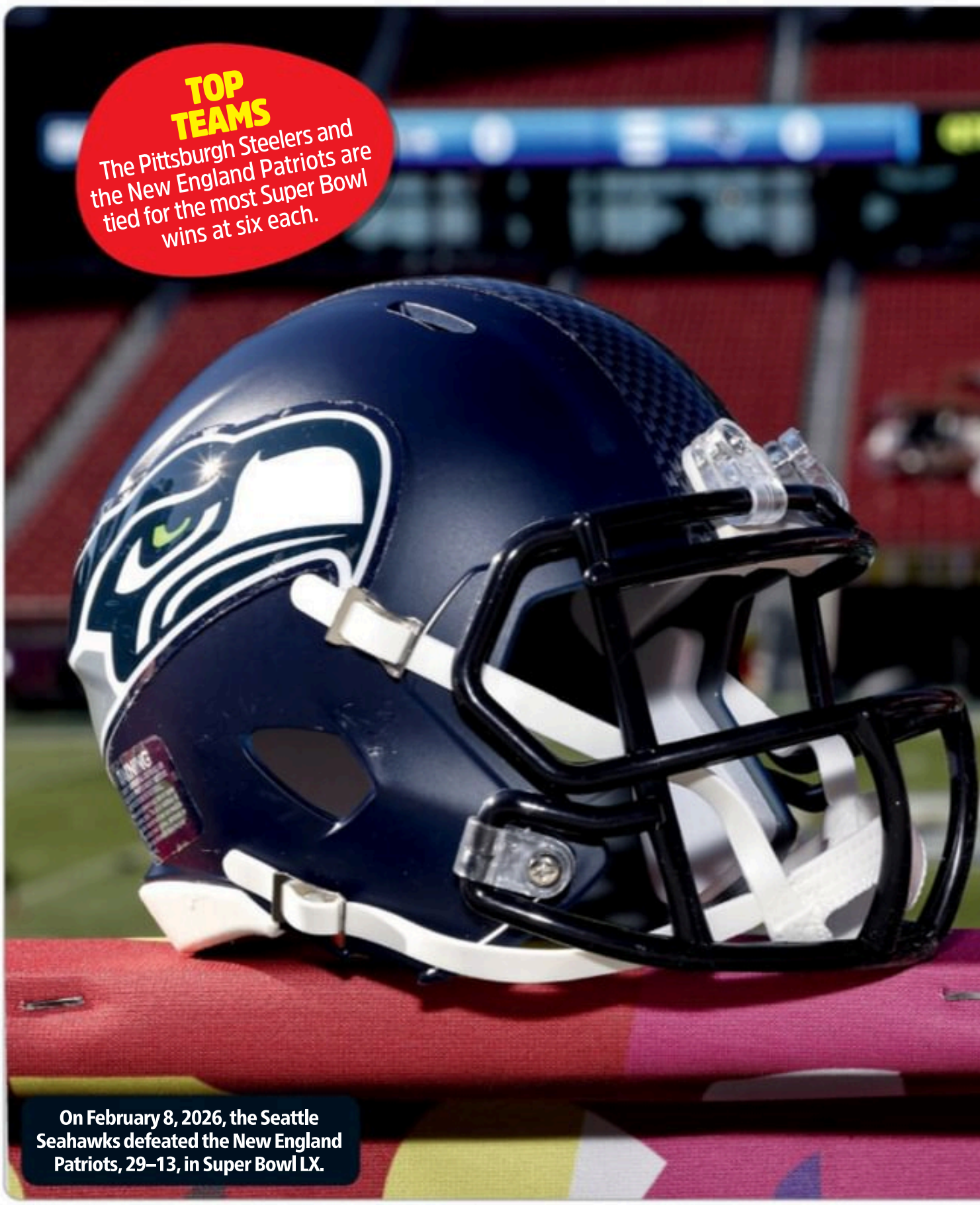
Big game beginnings

The National Football League (NFL) was founded in 1920 with 10 teams. The American Football League (AFL) was formed in 1959, and a championship game with the best team from each league was first played in 1967. Some people say a team owner suggested calling it the Super Bowl, while others claim the press coined the term. In 1970, the leagues joined forces under the NFL name. Today, 32 NFL teams are divided into two conferences: the National Football Conference (NFC) and the American Football Conference (AFC).

How it works

Each conference is divided into four divisions—East, West, North, and South—and the team with the most wins in its division heads to the playoffs. In addition, the three next-best teams in each conference get a Wild Card spot, for a total of 14 teams. They compete against each other until two teams—one from each conference—are left standing. Those teams play each other in the Super Bowl. At the end of the game, the winner gets to hoist the Vince Lombardi Trophy, which is named after the legendary head coach of the Green Bay Packers. Each player on the winning team also receives a Super Bowl ring.


The Vince Lombardi Trophy


TOP TEAMS
The Pittsburgh Steelers and the New England Patriots are tied for the most Super Bowl wins at six each.

On February 8, 2026, the Seattle Seahawks defeated the New England Patriots, 29–13, in Super Bowl LX.

Super snacks

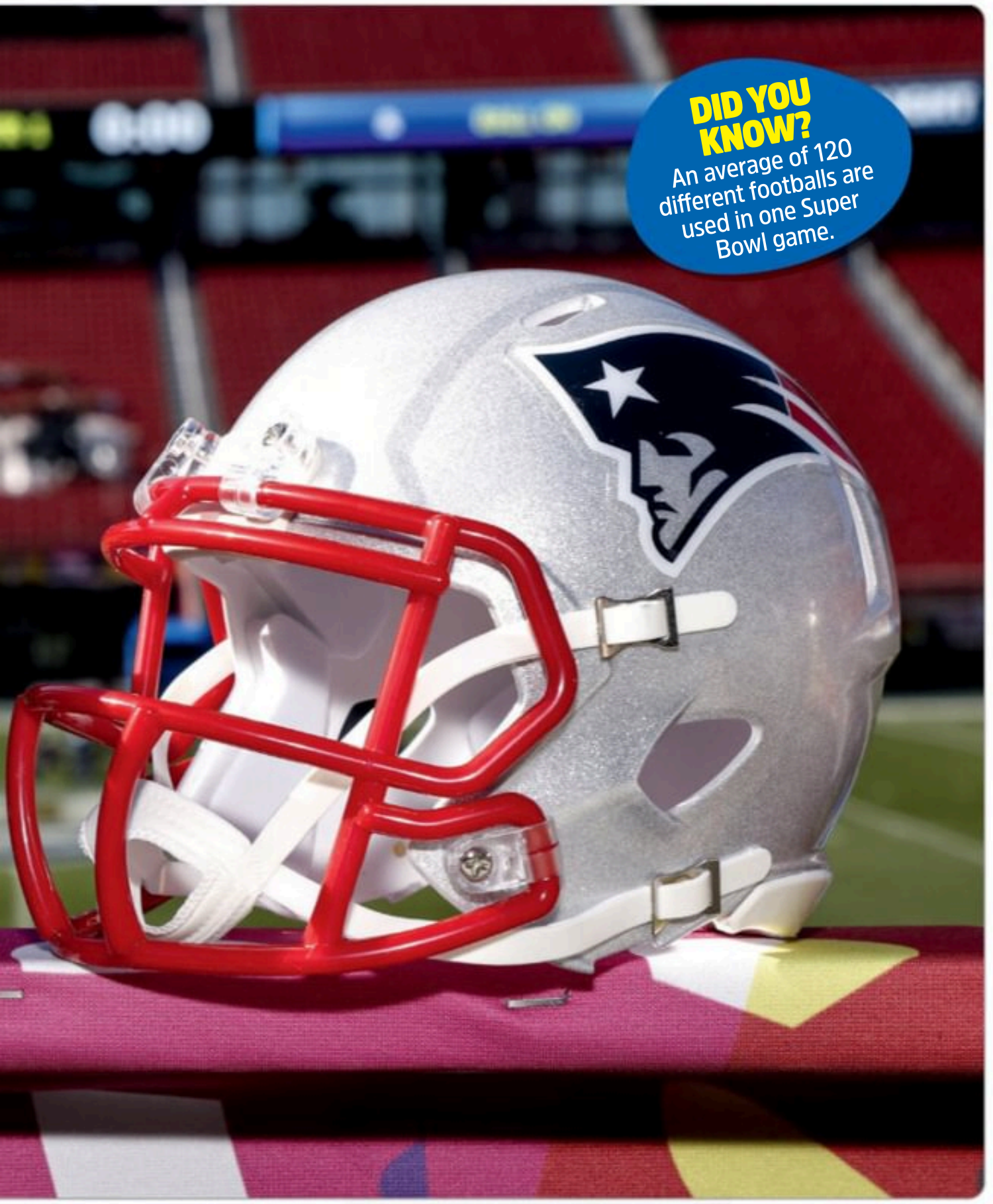
At game-day gatherings around the country, the food is almost as important as the action on the field. The most common Super Bowl snacks are chicken wings, chips and dips, and pizza.

Chicken wings

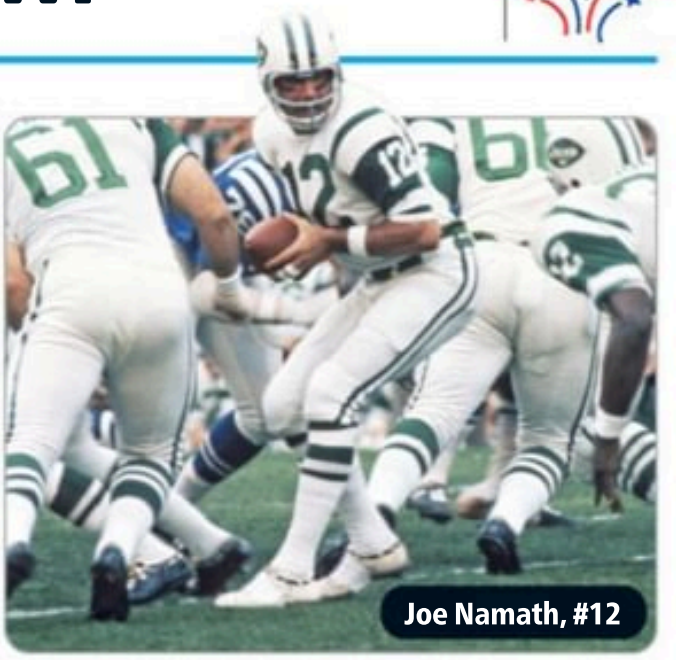
The National Chicken Council says football fans eat more than 1.4 billion wings on Super Bowl Sunday. A survey found that more than 50% of people said wings should be the game's official food. Popular wing flavors include BBQ, ranch, and Sriracha.

GETTY IMAGES (7); TIFFANY & CO. STUDIO; NFL

takes the field



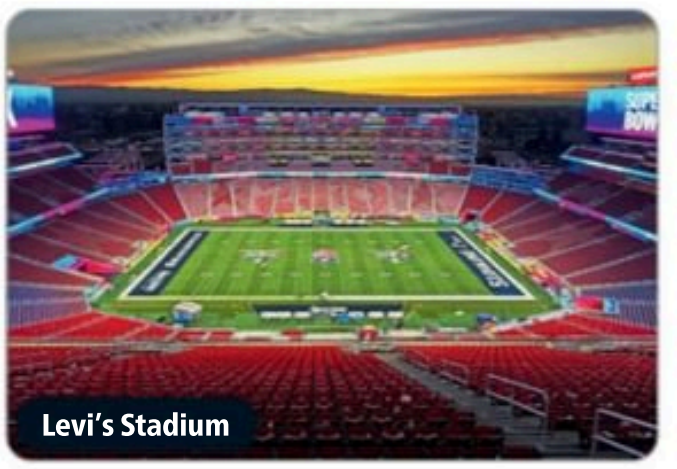
DID YOU KNOW?
An average of 120 different footballs are used in one Super Bowl game.



Joe Namath, #12

Memorable moments

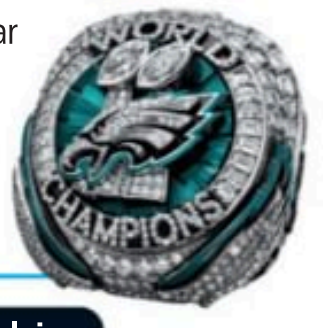
The Super Bowl has a long list of shocking upsets and major rivalries. Before Super Bowl III, the New York Jets were serious underdogs facing the Baltimore Colts. In what is still known as "the guarantee," Jets quarterback Joe Namath boldly declared that his team would win—and they did. In 2008, the New England Patriots, who were undefeated, were a minute away from winning Super Bowl XLII over the New York Giants. Then, Giants receiver David Tyree caught a pass by pressing the ball into his helmet. The Giants won—and Tyree's "helmet catch" became one of the most famous moments in NFL history.



Levi's Stadium

An American tradition

Football is an American sport, but the Super Bowl is a global event broadcast in more than 170 countries. In 2026, 125 million people watched the game. Even people who don't love football get caught up in the excitement, tuning in for the commercials and the halftime show. Some companies have paid as much as $10 million to run a 30-second ad during the game, and Amazon holds the record for the most expensive Super Bowl spot of all time, at $26 million. Halftime shows have evolved from marching bands to huge musical stars, and a record 133.5 million viewers watched Kendrick Lamar in 2025. In 2026, Bad Bunny made history as the first artist to perform the halftime show almost entirely in Spanish.



A 2025 Super Bowl ring

Chips and dips

In one poll, 68% of people said chips and dip were their first choice for a game-day snack. Salsa was the number one dip. Cheesy dips took second place, while French onion and guacamole came in third and fourth.

Pizza

Domino's sells about 2.4 million pizzas on Super Bowl Sunday, while Pizza Hut has sold more than 1.4 million pies on the day of the big game. Most pizza lovers choose pepperoni as their topping and order about an hour before kickoff.

A famous competition

A dog show in New York City is among the oldest exhibition events in the US.

The Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, considered the country's most prestigious dog show, celebrated its 150th anniversary this year.

The show in 1918

A tradition begins

Dog shows have a proud history that stretches back to the 19th century. The world's first known dog show took place in Newcastle, England, in 1859. The Westminster Kennel Club was founded in 1877 in New York City, named after a hotel the club's founders liked to visit. The club's first show, held the same year, featured 1,201 purebred dogs. The competition lasted four days and became a hit. The Best in Show award, the event's highest honor, was first presented in 1907.

Evaluating a cocker spaniel

How the dogs are judged

The American Kennel Club (AKC), founded in 1884, approves the guidelines for evaluating competitors in dog shows. A judge determines how well each dog matches "the Standard," a description of the qualities the AKC says their breed should have. Those qualities include physical traits (such as the color of the dog's coat), temperament, and ability to perform the original purpose for their breed. The AKC recognizes 205 pure breeds, which are categorized into seven groups—herding, hound, non-sporting, sporting, terrier, toy, and working.

PRIZE POOCHES
Wire fox terriers have won Best in Show at Westminster 15 times, more than any other dog breed.
WESTMINSTER KENNEL CLUB

Best in Show winners

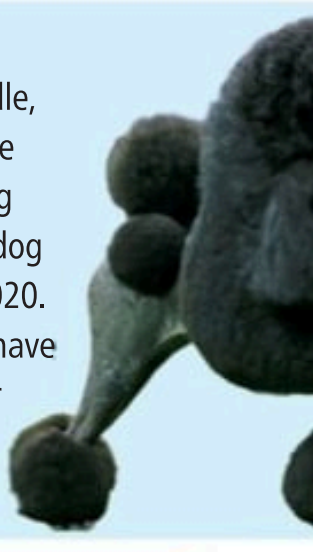
2023

A petit basset griffon Vendéen named Buddy Holly, from the hound group, made history in 2023 by becoming the first of his breed to win Best in Show. "Nothing bothers him," said Janice Hayes, his handler. "He loves all the cameras."

2024

Sage, a miniature poodle, won Best in Show at the 148th Westminster Dog Show, the first female dog to win the title since 2020.

Miniature poodles have claimed the honor four times in the event's history.



GETTY IMAGES

for top canines

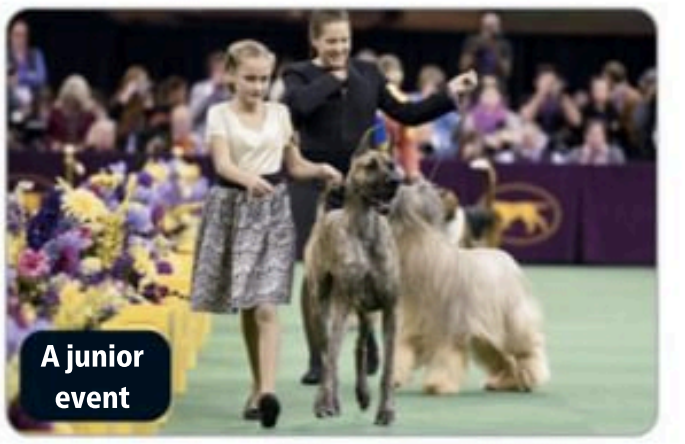
SHOWTIME! Other major dog shows in the US include the American Kennel Club National Championship and the National Dog Show.

Uno, a beagle, won the Best in Show title in 2008.

The Best in Show trophy

Naming the winners

Animals get invited to the Westminster Dog Show by performing well in other AKC competitions leading up to it. At Westminster, the dogs are first judged against other members of their breed, with one being named the best of each breed or variety. Those winners are then judged against the other breed winners in their group, and one is determined to be the best in each group. Finally, the seven group winners compete to be named Best in Show. Polished pewter trophies are presented to each of the group winners as well as the Best in Show winner. The Best in Show winner also receives the Westminster Legend Trophy, which is a special hand-engraved crystal bowl.



A junior event

Exciting competition

About 2,500 canines from around the world compete in the Westminster Dog Show, with hundreds more participating in other Westminster events. The agility competition—which is open to mixed-breed canines—challenges dogs to go through a timed obstacle course following commands, while the obedience competition tests how well dogs follow their handlers' instructions. In the dock diving event, dogs leap as far into the water as they can. There is also a Junior Showmanship competition for children between the ages of 9 and 18 to determine who is best at handling a dog. At the 2023 Best in Show award presentation, the judge said the dogs "give so much to our lives, whether it's here in the show ring, or in the field, or even just greeting us when we come home at the door."

2025

Monty, a 5-year-old giant schnauzer, took the top prize last year, becoming the first of his breed to do so. Known for their strength and intelligence, giant schnauzers were originally bred in Germany to drive cattle and guard farms.

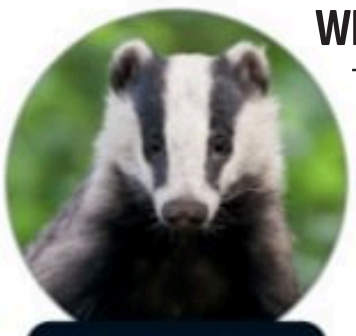
2026

Penny, a 4-year-old Doberman pinscher from the working group, beat out nearly 2,500 dogs to win the 150th Westminster Dog Show. It's the first time a Doberman has won the title since 1989 and the fifth time ever.

The story behind the

Every February, a groundhog predicts an early spring or a long winter.

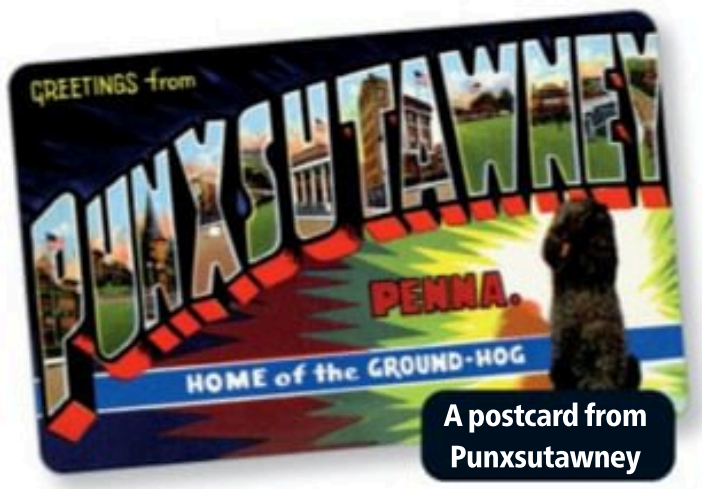
How did people come to rely on a furry animal to forecast the weather? The customs of Groundhog Day date back to the 16th century.



A European badger

What is Groundhog Day?

The day is observed every February 2 in the US and Canada. According to legend, if a groundhog (a species of marmot) emerges from its den and sees its shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter. If it doesn't see its shadow, spring weather is coming soon. The day has roots in ancient Europe, in the Christian holiday called Candlemas. Long before modern tools to predict the weather were invented, a sunny Candlemas was thought to mean 40 more days of winter. Later, Germans added small animals, like badgers and hedgehogs, to the holiday. If they saw their shadows, there would be 40 more days of cold.



A postcard from Punxsutawney

The event comes to the US

When German immigrants arrived in America in the 1700s, they began using groundhogs, which are native to North America, to predict the weather. The first mention of Groundhog Day was in 1886 in the *Punxsutawney Spirit*, a Pennsylvania newspaper. The Punxsutawney Groundhog Club was formed in 1899, and "Groundhog Lodges" followed in the 1930s to keep the culture of the Pennsylvania Dutch (also known as Pennsylvania Germans) alive. Groundhog Day became widely known due to televised coverage and a groundhog's visit to the White House in 1986.

DID YOU KNOW?
Groundhogs go by different names. They are also known as woodchucks, land beavers, and whistle-pigs.

Punxsutawney Phil and his handler in Gobbler's Knob

More animals that predict the weather

Punxsutawney Phil isn't the only seasonal prognosticator. Meet three more animals throughout the US who are called into service to forecast the weather.

Quentin

Quentin the Quahog

More than 30 years ago in Nantucket, Massachusetts, the harbormaster began a tradition: a clam that predicts the weather. If Quentin the Quahog squirts seawater to the right when opened, spring weather will arrive early. If it squirts left: more winter.

Fil

GETTY IMAGES (5); JAMIE CUSHMAN/NANTUCKET INQUIRER AND MIRROR; OREGON ZOO; COURTESY OF RALPH AND SANDRA FI

quirky holiday

WOW!
Groundhogs usually weigh between 12 and 15 pounds, but Punxsutawney Phil weighs 20 pounds.
FUN FACT
The term "Groundhog Day," meaning to relive the same dull experiences over and over, was made popular by the 1993 film of the same name.

Celebrations today

The biggest Groundhog Day celebration in the US is still held in Punxsutawney. Each February 2, tens of thousands of people gather in an area near the town called Gobbler's Knob to find out if the groundhog will see his shadow. The festivities are led by the Inner Circle, a group from the Groundhog Lodges who wear top hats and speak in a Pennsylvania Dutch dialect. From February 1–3, events include lunch with groundhog Punxsutawney Phil and an annual Groundhog Ball. Elsewhere in North America, more than 150 additional Groundhog Day celebrations take place. They star other weather-predicting groundhogs, like Staten Island Chuck in New York City, who famously bit the city's mayor in 2009 (see above).

A forecast is read aloud.

How accurate is Phil?

Since his first forecast in 1887, Punxsutawney Phil has been right 39% of the time. (The Punxsutawney Groundhog Club claims there has been only one Phil. However, groundhogs live up to six years. You be the judge!) Phil's predictions include the 110 times he saw his shadow, the 21 times he didn't, and the one year he refused to appear. (Records are missing for some years.) Daniel Blumstein, a scientist who studies marmots, told NPR that he hopes Groundhog Day gives people a greater appreciation of nature and "a chuckle over the idea that it's the middle of the winter and we're hoping that a rodent will tell us what the future is."

Fil the Beaver

While Pennsylvania has Phil, the Oregon Zoo has Fil. Also known as Stumptown Fil, this beaver was born at the zoo in 2011 and started making weather predictions in 2020. The zoo admits that so far, Fil's dam-building skills are more impressive than his forecasts.

Bee Cave Bob

Bee Cave Bob the Armadillo

With groundhogs in short supply in Texas, Bee Cave Bob the Armadillo has been predicting weather for more than 15 years. Texans refer to February 2 as Armadillo Day in honor of their official state small mammal.

An exhilarating event

An annual competition has captivated sports fans for generations.

Dominant dynasties and sensational Cinderella stories make the men's and women's NCAA basketball tournaments, which begin each year in March, among the most thrilling sports events.

Harold Olsen

History of the tournament

The NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) is the primary governing body for college sports. The first men's basketball tournament was held in 1939, spearheaded by Ohio State basketball coach Harold Olsen. Eight teams competed, and Oregon defeated Ohio State for the title. The first women's NCAA tournament was held in 1982. Thirty-two teams competed, and Louisiana Tech won the title.

Choosing the teams

Today, 68 teams compete in both the men's and women's tournaments. The 31 teams that win their conference championship automatically qualify. The other 37 teams are awarded "at-large bids" by the NCAA Selection Committee, a group of college athletic directors and conference administrators. The teams are announced in an event on what's known as Selection Sunday.

How the competition works

Eight colleges compete in "play-in" games, with four advancing to complete the official grid of teams (called a bracket). The remaining 64 teams are then split into four regions. The teams in each region are assigned seeds (ranks) from 1 to 16, with 1 being the highest. Higher-seeded teams play lower-seeded teams in single-elimination rounds. The first two rounds determine who makes the Sweet 16. Those teams then compete to get into the Elite Eight, then the Final Four, and ultimately the national championship game for a chance to win the title and the trophy.

Oregon claimed the first-ever title.

ALL WINS, NO LOSSES
The 1975–1976 Indiana Hoosiers was the last men's team to go undefeated for an entire season.

UConn and South Carolina competed for the women's title in 2025.

Shining moments

Lorri Bauman

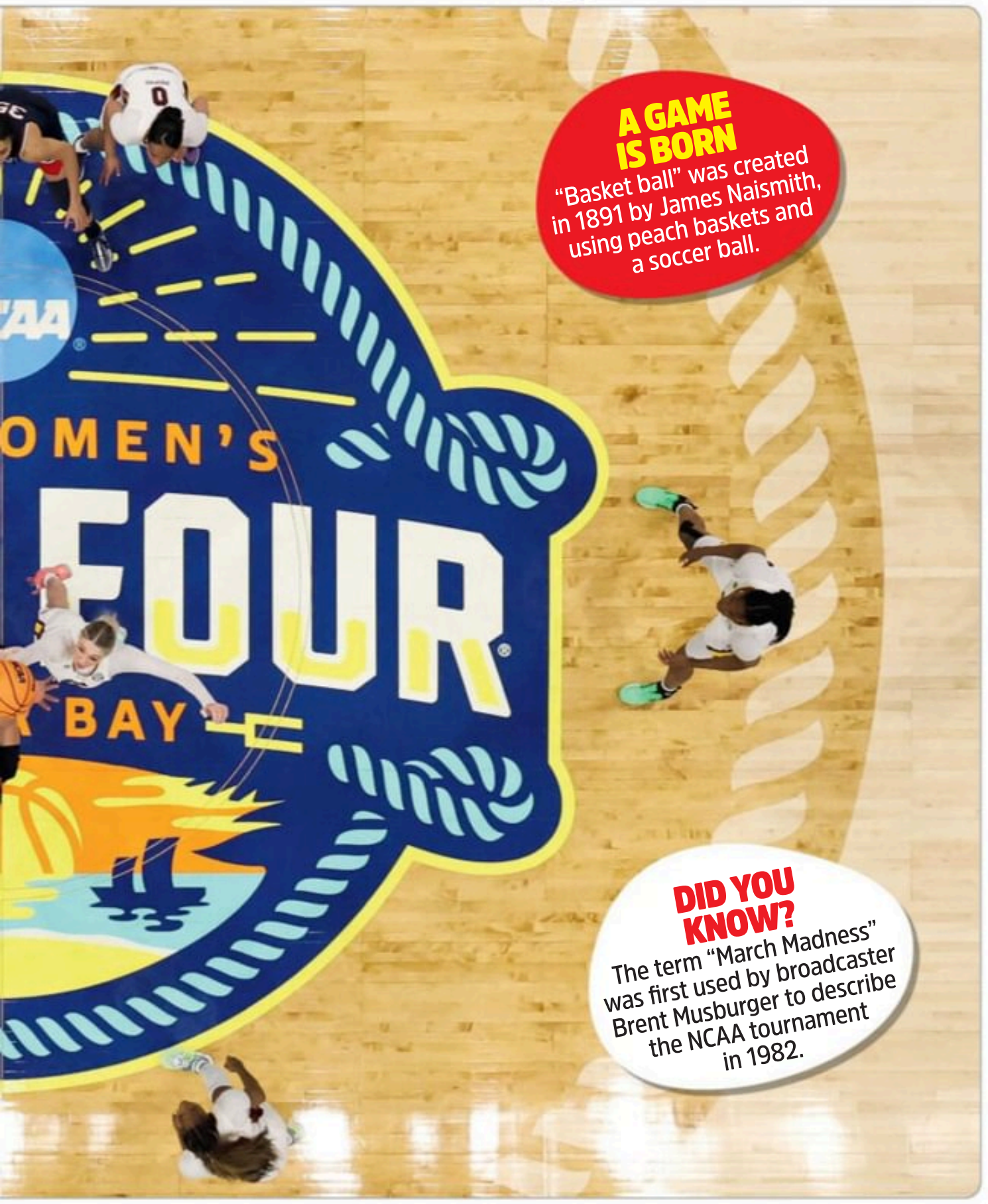
In 1982, Drake University's Lorri Bauman scored the most points ever in a women's NCAA tournament game, with 50 against Maryland.

Christian Laettner

In the 1992 Elite Eight, Christian Laettner of Duke University hit a buzzer-beater to defeat the University of Kentucky in overtime. Duke went on to win their second straight championship.

GETTY IMAGES (6); UNIVERSITY OF OREGON LIBRARY; OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY; NCAA (2); DES MOINES REGISTER/USA TODAY NETWORK

in college basketball


A GAME IS BORN
"Basket ball" was created in 1891 by James Naismith, using peach baskets and a soccer ball.
DID YOU KNOW?
The term "March Madness" was first used by broadcaster Brent Musburger to describe the NCAA tournament in 1982.

Breanna Stewart won four NCAA titles at UConn.

Major programs

The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) has won the most men's titles in NCAA tournament history, with 11. UCLA head coach John Wooden won 10 titles in 12 seasons from 1964 through 1975. The University of Kentucky is second with eight national titles. The University of North Carolina and the University of Connecticut (UConn) are tied for third, with six titles each. As of 2025, Geno Auriemma has led UConn to the most women's titles, with 12. The University of Tennessee has the second-most, with eight wins under legendary coach Pat Summitt. Baylor University, Stanford University, and the University of South Carolina are tied for third, with three titles each.

Walter Clayton Jr. with the 2025 trophy

Amazing action

Once the tournament teams are announced on Selection Sunday, millions of college basketball fans fill out brackets to predict the winners of every game. Then the action begins at venues across the US and continues for about two weeks. In 2025, the University of Florida beat the University of Houston, 65–63, to win the men's championship. Walter Clayton Jr. was named Most Outstanding Player. In the women's contest, UConn beat the University of South Carolina, 82–59. Azzi Fudd was named Most Outstanding Player, cementing her place among the tournament's all-time greatest performers.

University of Maryland Baltimore County

UMBC made history in 2018 when they became the first 16-seed to defeat a 1-seed in the tournament. In the stunning upset, they beat Virginia, 74–54.

Arike Ogunbowale

In the 2018 Women's Final Four, Notre Dame's Arike Ogunbowale hit back-to-back last-minute three-point shots in the tournament semifinal and again in the national title game.

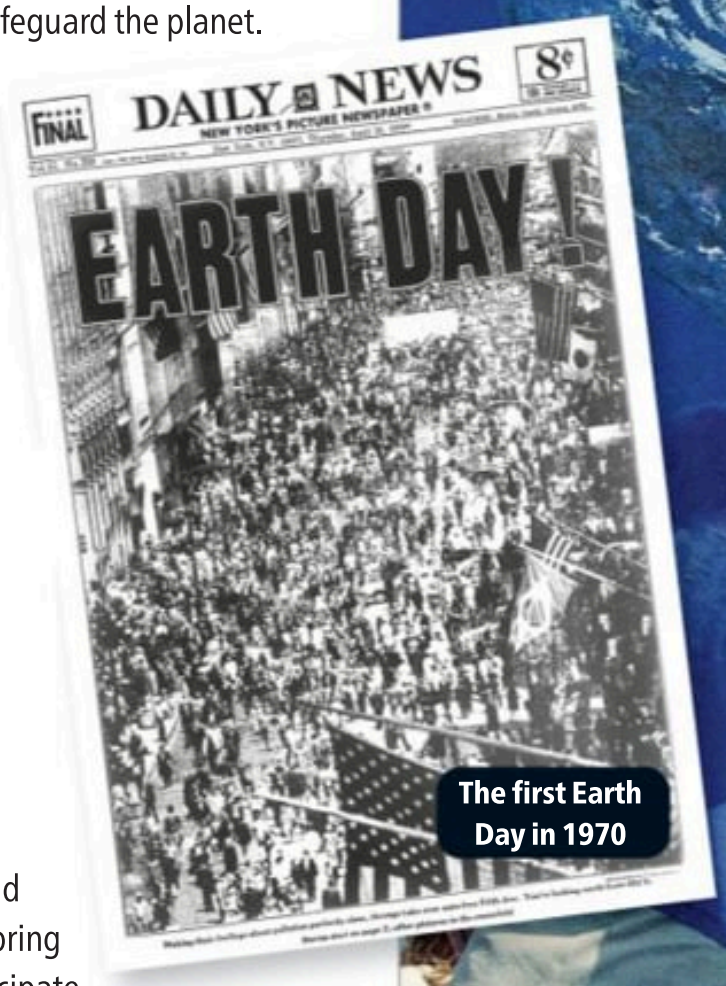
A special call to help

More than 55 years after the first Earth Day, find out how it began.

Every year on April 22, Earth Day is celebrated to raise awareness of the importance of protecting the environment. Before the first event was held in the US in 1970, cars used gasoline that contained a poisonous ingredient and factories pumped pollution into the air and water. Earth Day brought people together to make changes and safeguard the planet.

Standing up for the environment

Earth Day started in 1970 when Gaylord Nelson, a politician from Wisconsin, organized a national event to tell people about environmental problems. Nelson was a member of the US Senate, one of the two parts of Congress in Washington, DC. The date in April was chosen because most college students would have returned from spring break and could participate on their campuses. On that day, 20 million Americans—about 10% of the nation's population at the time—gathered on the streets and in parks and auditoriums across the country to demonstrate for a healthy planet.



The first Earth Day in 1970

Earth Day 1990 in Washington, DC

Earth Day started with a California oil spill

On January 28, 1969, oil started pooling in the ocean near Santa Barbara, California. The cause was a leak in an oil well, which is what companies dig into the ground or ocean floor to drill for oil. By the time the company that owned the well stopped the leak—more than 11 days later—about 3 million gallons of oil (enough to fill 35 Olympic swimming pools) had spread over about 35 miles. The spill killed thousands of birds, fish, and mammals.

The devastation was shown on television, and people around the country became sad and angry. President Richard Nixon visited the disaster site. So did US Senator Gaylord Nelson. The spill made politicians and other people realize that modern inventions, such as oil wells, could harm the environment in unexpected ways. One month after Nelson visited, he announced his idea for what would become the first-ever Earth Day.

Cleaning up the 1969 oil spill

GETTY IMAGES (8); SHUTTERSTOCK; UW ARCHIVES

the planet

HIGH HONOR
Gaylord Nelson received the Presidential Medal of Freedom for founding Earth Day.
GLOBAL MOVEMENT
More than 190 countries around the world now participate in Earth Day.

Gaylord Nelson

The first Earth Day

Earth Day participants in 1970

Additional protections

After the first Earth Day, the US government passed the Clean Air Act to help reduce pollution from cars and factories. The Clean Water Act was also passed to keep America's rivers, lakes, and streams free of chemicals and waste. President Richard Nixon created the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a government organization that still exists today. The EPA enforces laws that protect the environment and studies new ways to keep it safe.

How Earth Day has grown

In 1990, 20 years after Earth Day started, it changed from an event that took place in the US to a worldwide movement. About 200 million people in 141 countries took part. They encouraged action, such as recycling used items instead of putting them in the trash. Since then, Earth Day has expanded to include more than a billion participants. Every year, people remove litter from their local areas, clean up beaches and parks, and plant millions of trees.

Powerful messages

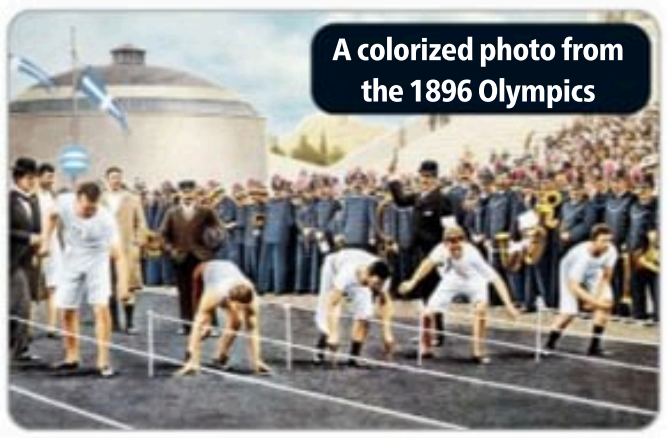
There is a different theme for Earth Day each year. (It was "Our Power, Our Planet" in 2026.) Every one is a reminder that each person has the ability to help the Earth by making smart choices. From saving energy to conserving water to protecting wildlife, children and adults can join together to make a difference. Communities across the world host rallies, nature walks, and educational events to inspire action.

By learning about and caring for the planet, people can help keep the Earth beautiful for generations to come.

A running tradition

Boston's 26.2-mile road race is the world's oldest annual marathon.

The Boston Marathon in Massachusetts is one of the most prestigious running competitions in the world.


A colorized photo from the 1896 Olympics

Ancient origins

The roots of all marathons go back to a legend from Ancient Greece about a soldier who ran from the Greek town of Marathon to Athens, bringing news of victory by the Greek army. To honor that legend, the first-ever marathon was held at the 1896 Olympic Games in Athens. This inspired John Graham, the US Olympic team manager and a Boston Athletics Association member, to organize the first Boston Marathon in 1897. That race, won by John McDermott of New York, had 15 runners who competed on a course that was 24.5 miles long. In 1924, the race went to its current distance of 26.2 miles, as the Olympics had officially adopted that distance.

The first winner, John McDermott

The marathon today

The Boston Marathon has grown into one of the world's biggest distance races, with about 30,000 people participating each year. It is held on Patriots' Day, a Massachusetts state holiday celebrated on the third Monday in April in honor of the start of the American Revolution. A distinguishing feature of the Boston Marathon is that most runners must qualify. Men ages 18–34 have to have run a previous marathon in 2 hours, 55 minutes or less. For women in that age group, it's 3 hours, 25 minutes or less.

FAMOUS RACES

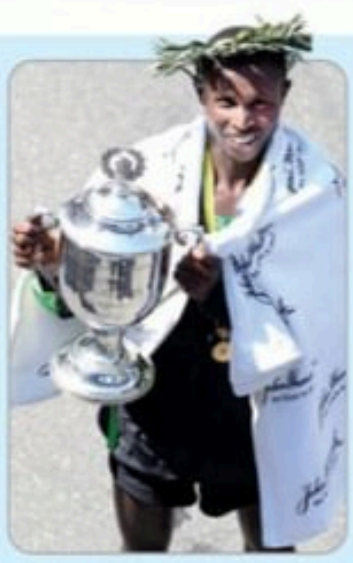
Boston is one of seven World Major Marathons—along with Chicago, New York City, Tokyo, Berlin, London, and Sydney.

The start of the Boston Marathon

Record holders

Geoffrey Mutai

The course record for men was set by Geoffrey Mutai of Kenya in 2011. He finished in 2 hours, 3 minutes, 2 seconds.



Manuela Schär

Swiss athlete Manuela Schär set the course record in the women's wheelchair division in 2017 with a time of 1 hour, 28 minutes, 17 seconds. It was the first of her four Boston Marathon wins.

DAILY NEWS AND WICKED LOCAL STAFF PHOTO/KEN MCGAGH/USA TODAY NETWORK; DAVID BUTLER II/USA TODAY SPORTS; GETTY IMAGES (6)

like no other

FUN FACT
The Boston Red Sox play a morning game the day of the marathon with a live feed of the race shown in Fenway Park.

REPEAT WINNER
Ernst Van Dyk, a men's wheelchair competitor, has won the most Boston Marathon titles, with 10.

Kathrine Switzer in 1967

Expanding the field

Today thousands of women and adaptive athletes compete in the Boston Marathon, but that was not always the case. The first woman to complete the marathon was Roberta Gibb, who snuck into the race in 1966. The next year, Kathrine Switzer became the first woman to get a bib (the tag worn by competitors showing their race number) after signing her application with her initials, which kept her gender hidden. When it became clear during the race that she was a woman, an official unsuccessfully tried to push her off the course. In 1972, the first year women could officially enter, eight women competed and Nina Kuscsik had the fastest time. In 1975, Bob Hall became the first athlete in a wheelchair to officially finish the race.

Support on the course in 2014

Strength and resilience

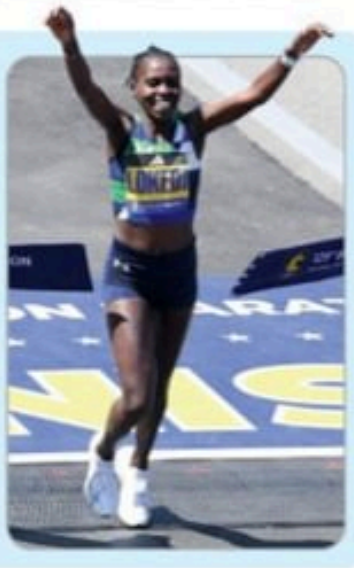
Tragedy struck the Boston Marathon in 2013 when, about five hours into the race, terrorists set off two bombs close to the finish line. Three people watching the race were killed, and more than 260 were injured. After the attacks, the phrase "Boston Strong" became a popular slogan that captured the city's resilient spirit. April 15 is now officially recognized as One Boston Day to encourage volunteer service and acts of kindness. In 2019, a memorial to the three victims of the bombings was completed. Every year, Boston has a moment of silence on the anniversary of the bombings to pause for remembrance and reflection.

Marcel Hug

Adaptive athlete Marcel Hug of Switzerland won the men's wheelchair division in 2024 with a time of 1 hour, 15 minutes, 33 seconds, a new course record. Hug is an eight-time winner of the marathon.

Sharon Lokedi

In 2025, Kenyan runner Sharon Lokedi finished in 2 hours, 17 minutes, 22 seconds in 2025, the fastest female time in the event's history. She broke the women's record by more than two and a half minutes.



A thrilling contest for

Each year, champion spellers compete for the highest honor — the Scripps Cup.

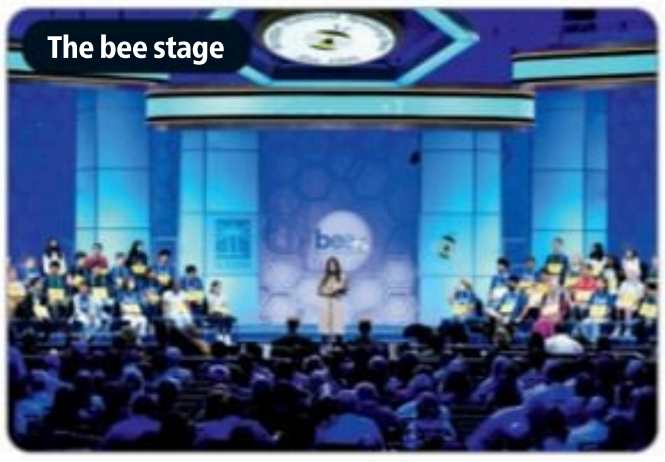
The Scripps National Spelling Bee, the nation's most prestigious spelling competition, is more than 100 years old.

Ed Sullivan with a winner in 1954

History of the bee

In 1925, the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, a Kentucky newspaper and the host of a successful state spelling bee, invited other newspapers to join them in hosting a national spelling bee. Nine US newspapers sponsored the event. More than 2 million schoolchildren participated in local bees until the field narrowed to nine contestants—one for each newspaper—who competed in Washington, DC. In 1941, the Scripps newspaper company took over sponsorship of the bee. It aired on national TV for the first time in 1946, and winners in the 1950s appeared on a popular variety program, *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary became the official referee of spelling words in 1958.


The bee stage

Advancing through the rounds

The goal of the Scripps bee is to enhance students' spelling skills, expand their vocabulary, and foster a love of language and learning. Today, about 11 million students from more than 25,000 schools compete in local spelling bees. Contestants can be from the US, its territories, and around the world. Winners can advance to county or district competitions, then move on to regional or statewide levels. These champions then advance to the final competition: the Scripps National Spelling Bee. In 2025, 243 contestants qualified to participate in the 100th anniversary of this bee.

BEHIND THE BUZZ
Documentary films about the Scripps bee include Spellbound (2002) and Spelling the Dream (2020).

Memorable bee moments

1925

The winner of the first bee was Frank Neuhauser, an 11-year-old from Kentucky. His winning word was "gladiolus," a type of flower. He won $500 in gold pieces.

1998

Jody-Anne Maxwell, a 12-year-old from Jamaica, became the bee's first Black winner and first non-US winner. She won after spelling "chiaroscurist," which is an artist who uses light and shadow to add depth to their work.

SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE (10); GETTY IMAGES (4); AP PHOTO (2); LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; SHUTTERSTOCK

word whizzes

Scenes from the bee over the years

Jacques Bailly (left) in 1980

How the competition works

Since 2011, the bee has taken place at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, Maryland, outside Washington, DC. The competition is open to students who are under age 15 or who have not yet completed 8th grade. Dr. Jacques Bailly, who won the 1980 Scripps bee as an 8th grader, has been the bee's official pronouncer since 2003. Spellers have 90 seconds to first pronounce the word, spell it, and pronounce it one more time. If they spell it correctly, they remain in the bee. If they do not, they are eliminated from the competition. The rounds continue until one speller is champion. If no champion emerges, a lightning round—in which spellers compete to spell the most words correctly in 90 seconds—determines the winner.

Winning the bee

The bee champion receives a $50,000 cash prize from Scripps, a commemorative medal, and the Scripps Cup trophy. Merriam-Webster also gives the winner a collection of reference books and a $2,500 cash prize. In 2024, Bruhat Soma, a seventh grader from Tampa, Florida, won the bee in a spell-off round, the second in the bee's history. Soma correctly spelled 29 words in 90 seconds. His winning word was "abseil," which means to slide down a rock or cliff using a rope. He had competed before in 2022 and in 2023. "Instead of going down, I decided to be really motivated by that," Soma said.

The champion in 2025 was Faizan Zaki, a 13-year-old from Allen, Texas, who had finished second in 2024. His winning word was "éclaircissement," which means enlightenment or the clearing up of something obscure.

2019

Eight contestants were named co-winners at this bee because the judges ran out of challenging words. Afterward, the competition organizers expanded their word list to make sure this would not happen again.

2022

Harini Logan, a 14-year-old from Texas, became this bee's champion in the first-ever lightning-round tiebreaker. She accurately spelled 22 words in 90 seconds, with "moorhen," a marsh bird, as her final winning word.

Huge celebrations of

A popular tradition showcases what makes each state special.

As summer winds down, a series of American cultural events begins to gear up. That's when people flock to state fairs in 48 states and Washington, DC. The two biggest fairs take place in Texas, from late September to October, and in Minnesota, from late August to September.

Elkanah Watson

The first state fairs

As far back as the Roman Empire, people celebrated holidays with fairs involving games and contests. Over time, fairs began to focus more on agriculture. In 1807, Elkanah Watson of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, organized the first agricultural fair in the US—consisting entirely of sheep-shearing demonstrations. Soon other farmers hosted public gatherings where they could show their animals and win prizes. These became popular enough that New York organized the first official state fair in 1841, drawing more than 10,000 visitors. As fairs caught on across the country, they began showcasing new technology, entertainers, and other crowd-pleasing attractions.

A state fair in 1844

Weeks of excitement

State fairs today are a source of pride and an opportunity to highlight what the state has to offer. Unlike county fairs, which usually last for a few days, state fair festivities typically go on for one to three weeks. During that time, up to 2 million people visit each state's fairgrounds—some of which span hundreds of acres of land. Several states, including Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, and New York, allow guests to camp on or near the fairgrounds for days.

DID YOU KNOW?
Every year, 4,350 pounds of popcorn is eaten at the Indiana State Fair.

WOW!
If you stacked the 450,000 cups of milk sold at the New York State Fair each year, they would reach higher than the Empire State Building.

A giant Ferris wheel at the Minnesota State Fair

Fair foods

State fairs are known for their food—and since many people walk around while eating, much of it is handheld. If it's not in a bowl, basket, or bucket, it's probably on a stick. Here are four fair classics.

Pickle dog

Variations of this creation have appeared at several different fairs. In Minnesota, it's a pickle spear rolled in cream cheese and pastrami. In South Carolina, the "Dilly Dilly Dog" is a pickle stuffed into a corndog.

ALAMY (4); COURTESY THE FLORIDA STATE FAIR; THE BIG E; GETTY IMAGES (6)

summer fun

A fair game

Something for everyone

Animal exhibitions are still a state fair standard, along with a wide variety of other options. Some hold talent contests, bake-offs, and wacky competitions, such as rubber chicken throwing, duct tape creations, beard growing, and Colorado's "Pet Rock Olympics." Sculptures carved out of butter have been a favorite since the early 1900s. Fairgoers can also see concerts, comedy performances, sporting events, and fireworks. For many, the most exciting part of the fair is the "midway," a term that originated in 1893 at a world's fair in Chicago, Illinois, and refers to an area with carnival rides and games. Guests can ride a 230-foot-tall Ferris wheel in Florida, a 200-foot giant slide in Wisconsin, and a half-mile-long "SkyGlider" in Ohio.

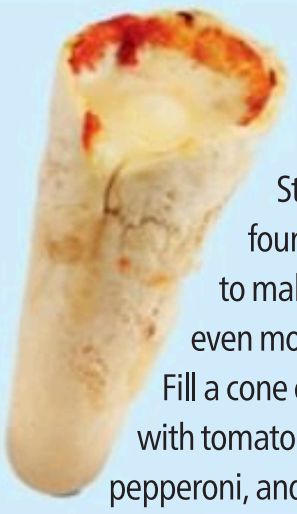
A butter sculptor carves a dairy princess.

One big fair for America's 250th

In the summer of 2026, the "Great American State Fair" will turn the National Mall in Washington, DC, into a huge fair celebrating America's semiquincentennial birthday. The event will bring together fair traditions and signature foods from all 50 states, with each state presenting what makes its own fair special. Highlights will include Hawaiian hula dancers, Alaskan ice carving, Texas steaks, and Maine lobster rolls. Just like at their home state fairs, rides, games, music, farm exhibits, and hands-on activities will celebrate local culture and history from everywhere across the nation.

Corn in a cup

Popular at the Iowa State Fair since 2015, this Mexican-inspired cup is filled with sweet corn kernels, mayonnaise, cheese, sour cream, lime juice, spices, and chorizo or pork sausage.



Pizza cone

The Florida State Fair found a way to make pizza even more portable: Fill a cone of bread with tomato sauce, pepperoni, and cheese.

Deep-fried cheese curds

A favorite at the Wisconsin State Fair and other fairs nationwide, these chunks of fresh cheese are dipped in batter and fried for a crispy, melty snack.

Our food heritage

66 Burgers
68 Pizza
70 Barbecue
72 Bagels
74 Chili
76 Doughnuts

GETTY IMAGES

A mouth-watering

Find out how the humble hamburger became a global sensation.

Whether at a summer barbecue, a fast-food drive-thru, or a fancy restaurant, Americans eat nearly 50 billion hamburgers every year. How did this dish get to be such a favorite? Get ready to dig in to its delicious history.

Tasty toppings

What is a burger?

The classic hamburger is made from beef that has been ground and formed into a flattened, round patty shape. The patty is then grilled or fried and sandwiched in a bun. Americans commonly add toppings like cheese, lettuce, tomatoes, onions, ketchup, mustard, and pickles. The word "hamburger" was shortened to "burger" by the 1930s, but the name never had anything to do with ham. In fact, the dish got its name from the town of Hamburg, Germany.

Where the burger began

Hamburg is Germany's largest seaport, and sailors there have traded with Russia since the 1200s. Russians introduced the Hamburg sailors to a dish called steak tartare—ground meat formed into a patty and eaten raw. Germans came to like the dish, both raw and cooked. When German sailors and immigrants traveled to the US in the 1700s and 1800s, they brought along their "Hamburg steak" recipe. At the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri, hamburgers served on bread made their debut to millions of Americans. Before long, the country was hooked.

The 1904 World's Fair

Beefy bests

Patty lovers everywhere have accomplished some incredible feats over the years, making burgers bigger, better, and even shinier. Here are a few of the beefiest achievements in hamburger history.

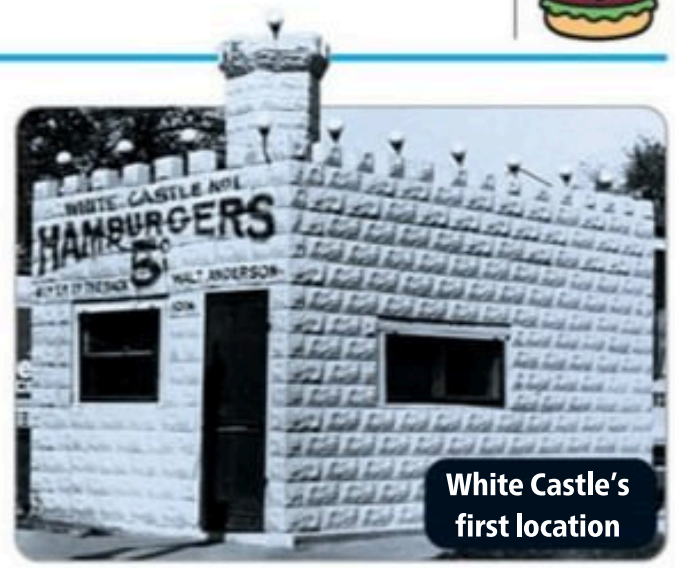
Most expensive

Robbert Jan De Veen of the Netherlands created a record-breaking burger in 2021 at his restaurant, De Daltons. Called the Golden Boy, it is made with wagyu beef, Iberian ham, king crab, white truffles, caviar, and gold leaf. The price: nearly $6,000.

GETTY IMAGES (4); WHITE CASTLE; COURTESY OF THE DALTONS; GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS LIMITED (2); IMPOSSIBLE FOODS

bite on a bun

SPEED EATING
Takeru Kobayashi of Japan holds a world record for the most hamburgers eaten in three minutes: 12.
WOW!
If all the burgers Americans eat each year were lined up side by side, they would circle the Earth 32 times.



White Castle's first location

The first fast food

In 1921, in Wichita, Kansas, a tiny burger shack opened in a white building that looked like a castle. For five cents, it served small hamburgers in paper sacks, cooked exactly the same way each time. People were excited about the quick, consistently tasty food, and White Castle became the world's first fast-food burger chain.

Burgers go big-time

Many more fast-food restaurants followed. The most famous was the chain founded by Dick and Mac McDonald in 1948. The brothers sped up service by cooking food in advance. Ray Kroc, who sold milkshake machines to the brothers, bought the business in 1961. By the 1990s, McDonald's had sold 100 billion hamburgers and was opening a new location every day. Today, there are more than 44,000 locations in at least 100 countries, with menus adapted to local tastes. McDonald's in Japan serves teriyaki burgers, and a burger on a baguette has been offered in France.

Beyond beef

A plant-based burger

It's no surprise that a food so popular has inspired many variations. There are burgers made from bison, ostrich, and elk. Some patties are now "grown" in labs or made out of plants. The first vegetarian burger (made from wheat, sesame, soy, and oats) was sold in 1982. At first, veggie burgers didn't taste much like beef, but some of today's plant-based patties are so similar it can be hard to tell the difference. This has started a debate: Can a meatless patty be called a burger? Some say yes—but others say that if lots of people buy plant-based burgers, beef farmers might sell less of their product. Certain states have even passed laws saying a product labeled as a burger must be made from real meat.

Largest collection

"Hamburger Harry" Sperl of Florida holds a world record for owning more than 3,700 hamburger-related items. His collection of "burgerbilia" includes toys, statues, lamps, pillows, a hamburger-shaped motorcyle, and a waterbed that looks like a cheeseburger.

Biggest patty

The largest hamburger ever made weighed 2,566 pounds, 9 ounces. Cooked by a five-person team in Germany, it included three huge meat patties, tomatoes, lettuce, cucumbers, onions, and sauce on a five-foot bun. It took nearly 300 people to assemble it.

A delectable slice of

Sink your teeth into the story of the pie loved around the world.

Eaten at parties, at family dinners, and even cold for breakfast, pizza is one of the most crowd-pleasing foods in the country and the world. It's hard to imagine life today without the classic round crust layered with sauce, cheese, and a variety of toppings.

Dough making in ancient Egyptian art

Origins of a beloved food

The story of pizza began more than 1,000 years ago. Ancient Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks ate flatbreads with toppings. One flatbread from the year 79 CE was found cut into eight equal slices, like pizza today. The dish came to the world's attention after French author Alexandre Dumas visited Naples, Italy, in 1835. He wrote that he saw many people buying slices of flatbread topped with tomatoes, cheese, and other foods, like tiny fish. The Italians had a word for it: pizza. The word's earliest origins might be from the Greek *pitta*, meaning "bread," or from *bizzo*, which meant "bite" in Langobardic, an ancient European language. Some people think it might come from the Latin word *pinsere*, meaning press or pound, which is what pizza makers do with the dough.

WOW! The largest pizza ever made was 13,957.77 square feet and topped with about 630,496 pepperoni slices.

Pizza pride

Types of pizza vary from place to place around the world. Locals have fierce loyalties to their favorite pie, and food critics spend time ranking them. Whether you like a thin, crispy crust or a thick and chewy one, there's a pizza out there for you.

Neapolitan

A classic Naples pizza has an extra-thin crust and simple toppings, and it bakes in a wood-fired oven of at least 800° F for 60 to 90 seconds. Official Neapolitan pies are certified in Italy, but many Naples-style pizzas are made in the US.

Chicago deep dish

Deep-dish pizza has tall sides and a thick crust that's buttery, crispy, and full of flavor. Cheese goes on the bottom, then toppings are added, and sauce goes on top. Deep dish is usually eaten with a fork and knife.

GETTY IMAGES (8); ALAMY; SHUTTERSTOCK (2)

a savory pie

SPECIAL DELIVERY
In 2001, Pizza Hut sent the first pizza into space, delivering it to Russian astronaut Yuri Usachov at the International Space Station.

Pizza night!

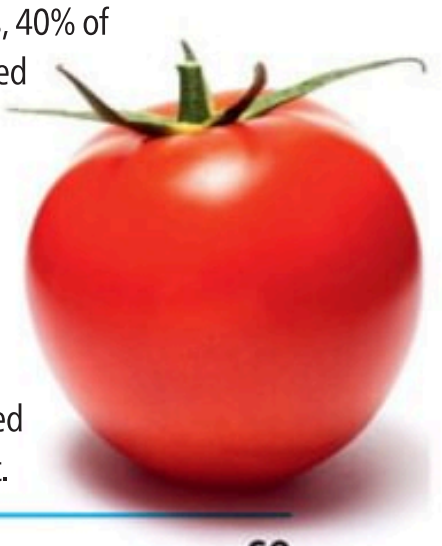
An increasing craving

Pizza caught on around the world because it was inexpensive, easy to make, and delicious. Many Italians came to the US in the late 1800s and 1900s. They made pizzas in their new land, and locals grew curious about the dish. In 1905, Gennaro Lombardi, an immigrant from Naples, opened a shop with a coal-fired oven in New York City. Lombardi's was the first licensed pizzeria in the US (and is still operating today). As pizzerias opened in Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, and other locations, the country fell in love with the fast, tasty treat. Today, there are more than 75,000 pizzerias in the US, where people spend nearly $50 billion on pizza every year.

Some popular toppings

Toppings around the world

In 2014, scientists confirmed that mozzarella was the best pizza cheese because of its stretchiness, proportion of oil and water, and melting ability. Pepperoni is the most popular pizza topping in the US, with sausage and mushrooms in second and third place, and anchovies in last place. Favorite toppings vary within the country. In one survey of local pizzerias, 40% of customers in Georgia ordered pepperoni, while 20% in California did. If you visit France, you might find a fried egg on your pie, while green peas are a popular choice in Brazil. In Finland, pizza is often topped with smoked reindeer meat.



New York style

The "regular" has a chewy crust, a thin layer of sauce, and gooey mozzarella. Toppings are added over the cheese. There are thousands of pizzerias in New York City where patrons on the go can buy a slice on a paper plate.

California style

A combination of other types, a California pizza is small enough that one person can eat the whole thing. It has a traditional crust but is often topped with vegetables, barbecue chicken, or other unusual ingredients and sauces.

The smoky secrets of

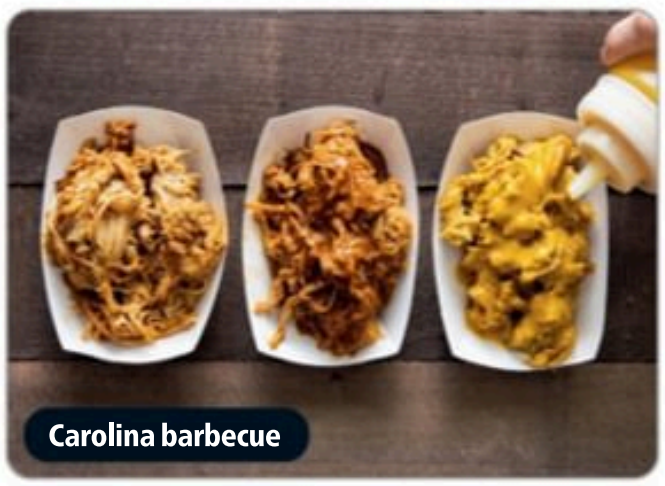
Savory or sweet, meat or meatless, smoked food is a culinary classic.

Barbecue is one of the oldest cuisines in the US. Different parts of the country are known for their regional flavors and cooking methods.

Fish is cooked on a *barbacoa*.

What is barbecue?

Barbecue is food cooked slowly on a grill or over a fire pit. The word "barbecue" comes from the Taíno, Indigenous people who inhabited the Caribbean during the period from 1200–1500. *Barbacoa* was their word for grilling on a high wood grate. In the 1500s, European explorers learned the method and brought it to what is now the southeastern US.



Carolina barbecue

The origin of regional specialties

As people moved west across America, they took barbecue with them and experimented with meats, sauces, and rubs (spice mixtures). Four main regional types of barbecue developed over centuries. Carolina style is focused on pork and sauces with a vinegar base and condiments like ketchup or mustard. Texas is known for a cut of beef called brisket. Kansas City features burnt brisket ends and a sweet, thick tomato sauce. Memphis style is pork ribs served "wet" with sauce or "dry" with a rub. Wood is the traditional fuel that gives barbecue its smoky flavor, but charcoal, gas, and electricity are also used.

GETTY IMAGES

DID YOU KNOW?
America's "Barbecue Belt" stretches through seven states: Alabama, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas.

FRIENDLY RIVALRY
Kansas City (in Missouri) and Memphis (in Tennessee) are two of several US cities that claim to be "the barbecue capital of the world."

Memphis ribs are served dry or with sauce.

Barbecue styles across the globe

Cooking food slowly over a fire is one of the oldest ways of cooking, and many countries have their own take. Here are three examples, which can also be found in restaurants in the US.

Brazil

Called *churrasco* (a Portuguese or Spanish word for grilled meat), Brazilian barbecue started with cowboys who cooked hunks of steak on skewers and cut them off at the table. A Brazilian barbecue steakhouse is known as a *churrascaria*.

a backyard favorite

BRING YOUR APPETITE
Texas has the biggest barbecue pit in the world. It is 76 feet long and can cook up to four tons of meat.

Grilling for a crowd

The rise of barbecue culture

Barbecue has become so popular that it has inspired national competitions. The American Royal World Series of Barbecue, held in Kansas City, Missouri, is the largest barbecue competition worldwide. The Memphis in May World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest, which lasts four days, is considered one of the most prestigious events. Popular TV shows, including *Fire Masters* and *BBQ Brawl*, set pitmasters against one another to compete for money and prizes. The Barbecue Hall of Fame in Kansas City honors barbecue's heritage and inducts new members every year.

A vegan pulled jackfruit sandwich

What's next for barbecue

Although barbecue is rooted in tradition, the cuisine continues to change and evolve. More people across the US are discovering meat flavored with Asian and Middle Eastern spices. One example is za'atar, a tangy Middle Eastern blend of herbs. Another growing trend is meatless versions, ranging from plant-based ribs to cauliflower steaks to shredded jackfruit (a tropical tree fruit) that resembles pulled pork. Meanwhile, interest in American barbecue has spread. In recent years, US-style barbecue restaurants have opened in Asia, Europe, and South America.

Korea

Instead of grilling outside, Korean barbecue is cooked indoors on a grill at the center of the table. Each guest gets their own meat to cook as well as sauces and *banchan* (side dishes of pickled vegetables). Meats may include thinly sliced beef, chicken, and pork ribs.

South Africa

Barbecue in South Africa is known as *braai*. Lamb, beef, and pork are cooked over a grill called a *braaistand*. Wood fuels the fire, and everyone invited contributes cuts of meat. Braais are a central part of South African celebrations throughout the year.

Around the world with

Discover the fascinating story of this beloved round food.

Whether they're topped with cream cheese or toasted and buttered, bagels are one of the most popular foods in the world. In the US alone, people spend more than $3 billion on bagels every year. There is even a National Bagel Day celebrated annually on January 15. Here's a look at how these "rolls with holes" became such a hit.

An ancient Egyptian carving of bagel-like breads

A royal history

Thousands of years ago, Egyptian hieroglyphics (an ancient writing system) used symbols that looked like bagels. For centuries, the Chinese have snacked on *girde naan*, a ring-shaped crusty bread that's similar to a bagel. Another lookalike, *obwarzanek*, existed in Poland by 1394. An Austrian legend dates hand-rolled bagels to 1683, when a Jewish baker is said to have created one to honor the king, who had fended off an enemy. It was shaped like a stirrup, in reference to the king's horsemanship, and the Austrian-German word for stirrup is *beugel*.

Bagels go mainstream

Between 1880 and 1920, more than 20 million immigrants arrived in the US from Eastern and Southern Europe. Many Eastern Europeans were Jewish people who brought along their traditions and foods, including bagels. At first they settled mainly in New York City, where "New York bagels" became a hit. After World War II, many Jewish people moved to other parts of the US. The food grew in popularity across the country and took off in the 1970s, when pre-packaged bagels became available. By the mid-1990s, bagels were a multi-million-dollar industry.

The most popular flavor in the US is the "everything" bagel.

FUN FACT
The biggest bagel ever made weighed 868 pounds and was displayed at the New York State Fair in 2004.

Wacky bagel creations

American bagel makers have come up with an endless variety of new flavors and colors. Here are three of the wildest ones. Would you eat them?

Rainbow

This one is more about looks than taste. To get these vibrant hues, bakers dye portions of dough in different colors before layering and rolling them into colorful curves. This festive invention tastes like any other plain bagel.

GETTY IMAGES (5); ALAMY (2); COURTESY OF THE BAGEL NOOK

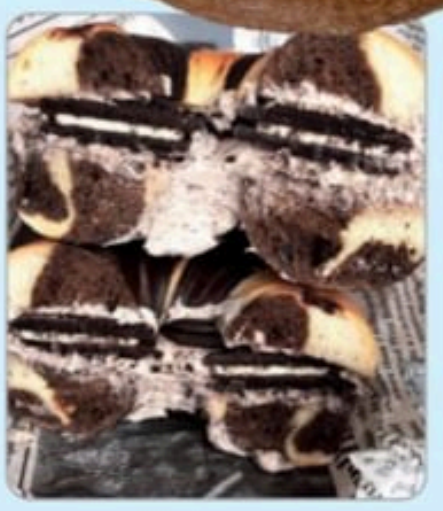
an ancient bread

BAGEL BLAST-OFF
In 2008, Montreal-style bagels traveled to outer space on the space shuttle Discovery.

CLEVER TRICK
Bagel holes made it easier for vendors to carry them on wooden poles and sell them around town.

Jalapeño cheddar

An American twist on a classic, this seriously spicy bagel is topped with sliced jalapeño chile peppers and melted cheddar cheese. For those who like theirs even spicier, jalapeños can also be tossed into the dough before it's baked.



Oreo

It's a sweet treat, a snack, and a bagel all rolled into one. Oreo cookies and cream cheese are mixed into the dough, and whole cookies are placed on top. Another recipe mixes chocolate and vanilla dough for a two-flavor treat.

Making bagels in 1976

The art of the bagel

Classic New York-style bagels are made with simple ingredients: flour, yeast, salt, sugar, and water. The process of making them is what gives bagels their texture and taste. The dough is rolled into circles and left to sit in the refrigerator for a few days, which makes it more flavorful. Next it's quickly boiled, then baked in an oven. Bagels are one of the only breads that are boiled before being baked, which gives them a shiny crust and a soft, doughy interior. The longer the bagel is boiled, the thicker the crust. Before baking, bagels can be sprinkled with seeds, salt, or cheese.

Boiled bagels ready to go into the oven

Bagels your way

Today, bagels can be bought warm in bagel shops or frozen at the grocery store. Traditional flavors like plain, poppy seed, and sesame are still popular, while more modern varieties include cinnamon raisin, blueberry, and chocolate chip. In addition to cream cheese and butter, toppings range from smoked salmon to tomato and avocado. The most popular flavors vary by region, and different places have put their own twist on them. Many New Yorkers consider their bagels to be the gold standard. People in Montreal, Canada, however, would argue that their smaller, sweeter bagels are the best. Bagels in Israel are baked but not boiled, and in Turkey, they're dipped in sweet water before baking. Whether fluffy or crunchy, savory or sweet, these beloved round breads have become part of everyday life throughout the world.

A hearty, spicy tradition

Get to know the origins of this tasty dish that is enjoyed across the US.

Chili has been eaten in the US for hundreds of years. How did it go from a roadside-stand offering to a kitchen-table staple?

Chili powder

Nicely spiced

Chili is considered a classic American comfort food. It is a thick sauce or stew traditionally made with red chile peppers, which gives the dish its spicy flavor and red color. Chili con carne is chili made with stewed meat that is either chopped or ground. Other ingredients can include beans, onions, and corn, as well as spices like cumin, chili powder, paprika, garlic, onion, coriander, oregano, and bay leaves. Chili can also be made without meat or with meat substitutes.

A postcard from the early 1900s

How it started

People in the Americas have been farming chile peppers and using them to make food for more than 10,000 years. In 1828, after visiting San Antonio, Texas, a Houston resident named J.C. Clopper wrote the earliest known description of chili in his journal. He called it "a kind of hash that had nearly as many peppers in it as pieces of meat and then stewed together." Chili became more popular in the mid-1800s as an easy recipe cowboys on the move could make over a campfire. In San Antonio, Texas, in the 1860s, a group of local Mexican women were known as "the Chili Queens." They cooked and sold the dish in the city's Military Plaza to soldiers, cattle ranchers, and travelers.

Millions of Americans eat chili every year.

GETTY IMAGES (5); COURTESY OF THE SAN ANTONIO CONSERVATION SOCIETY FOUNDATION

in a single bowl

HOT STUFF
There are between 3,000 and 4,000 types of chile peppers, with jalapeños being one of the most popular.

WOW!
The world's largest serving of chili, weighing in at 4,800 pounds, was served at a festival in Texas in 2017.

A chili cook-off

Popularity spreads

At the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, a San Antonio chili stand introduced more people to the dish. In 1895, a man from Texas named Lyman T. Davis developed the recipe for his Wolf Brand Chili and sold it from the back of a wagon for five cents a bowl. By the 1920s, it was canned and sold in stores across the US. During the Great Depression (period from 1929 to the late 1930s when unemployment and poverty soared), chili restaurants—known as "chili parlors"—were popular in the Midwest and Southwest because they offered a hot, inexpensive meal. Chili cook-offs—competitions in which cooks submit their chili for judging—took off in the 1950s. In 1977, chili was named the official state dish of Texas.

Cincinnati chili is served over spaghetti.

Regional tastes

Different states in the US have their preferred ways of preparing this classic dish. For example, Texans make theirs with beef but no beans and call it "Texas red." Green chili is served in New Mexico, where it is prepared with locally grown green chile peppers. The barbecue history of Kansas City, Missouri, is incorporated into its chili, which is made with burnt ends, brisket, pork shoulder, Worcestershire sauce, beans, and cumin. In Cincinnati, Ohio, a signature dish—chili served over spaghetti—was invented in the 1920s by immigrants from Macedonia, in Southeastern Europe. In New England, cooks make the hearty dish even heartier by adding fresh vegetables.

Delicious sweetness

The doughnut first captured hearts as a comfort food from home.

Each year, Americans eat about 10 billion doughnuts of many different flavors and types. Here's a look at how this delectable treat became a national favorite.

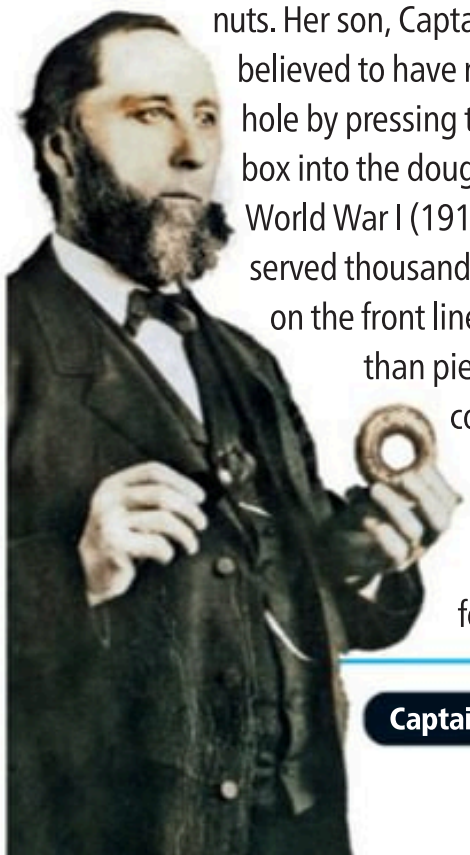
A 1600s Dutch painting

Early history

The modern doughnut can be traced back to the 1600s with the arrival of Dutch immigrants to New York. They prepared *olie koeken* or *olykoeks* ("oil cakes"). These early versions were dough balls filled with fruit and nuts. A recipe for a treat similar to a modern doughnut appeared in a UK cookbook in 1750. Washington Irving's 1809 book, *A History of New York,* is commonly credited with including the first written mention of doughnuts in the US. Irving described them as "balls of sweetened dough, fried in hog's fat, and called doughnuts or olykoeks."

A clever idea

In the mid-1800s, a woman from New England named Elizabeth Gregory made her sailor son and his shipmates deep-fried dough filled with nuts. Her son, Captain Hanson Gregory, is believed to have made the first doughnut hole by pressing the top of a round tin box into the dough's center. During World War I (1914–1918), volunteers served thousands of doughnuts to men on the front lines. Easier to prepare than pies or cakes, doughnuts could be made in a pan of oil. When US soldiers returned home, they brought their craving for doughnuts with them.



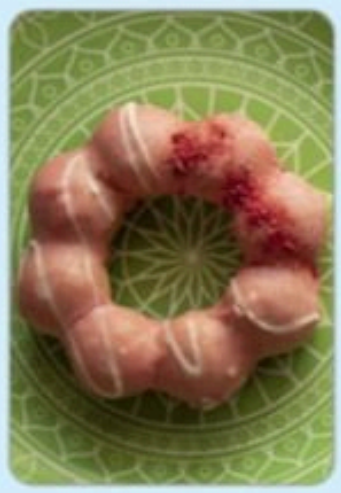
Captain Hanson Gregory

WOW! The world's largest doughnut was made in 2023 in Boston, Massachusetts, and weighed 225 pounds.

Fried dough worldwide

Japan

The Mister Donut chain in Japan popularized the "Pon de Ring," made of eight dough balls. It was later copied in the US as the mochi doughnut.



Italy

Dating back to ancient Rome, Italian *zeppoles* are deep-fried balls of dough dusted with powdered sugar. Zeppoles can also have fillings, like custard, cream, or sweet cheese.

GETTY IMAGES (6); PIETER VAN LAER; CAMDEN MAINE PUBLIC LIBRARY; SHUTTERSTOCK (2)

by the dozen

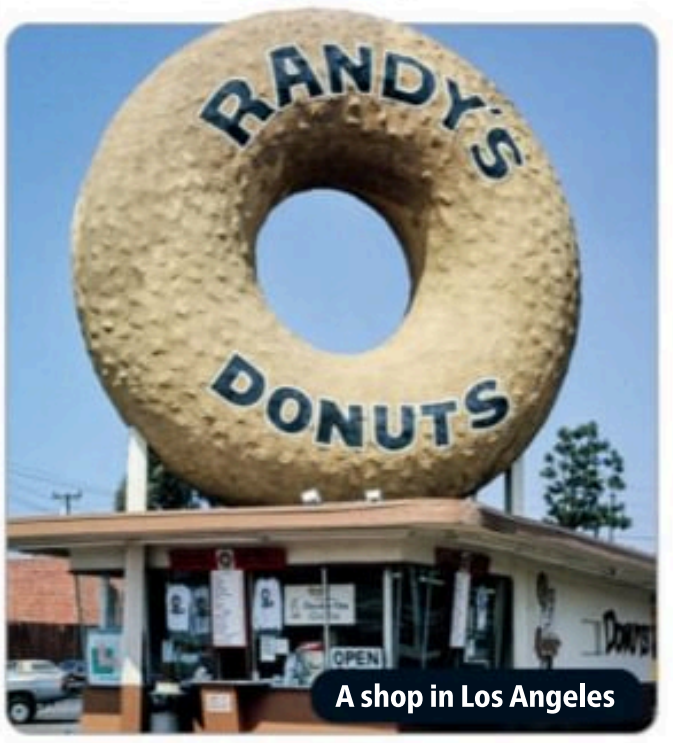
FAMOUS WORDS
A 1980s Dunkin' Donuts commercial made the phrase "time to make the doughnuts" popular.

TOP SPOT
Glazed doughnuts are the most popular variety in the US.

Doughnut servers in 1940

A surge in demand

In New York City in 1920, a Russian immigrant and bakery owner named Adolph Levitt created a machine to make doughnuts faster. Businessman Vernon Rudolph started selling doughnuts door to door in North Carolina 17 years later, calling them Krispy Kremes. During World War II (1939–1945), female Red Cross volunteers, called "Doughnut Dollies," made fried treats for service members. In the 1950s, major doughnut chains, such as Dunkin' Donuts, were founded in the US. In the 1970s and 1980s, Cambodian refugees in Los Angeles, California, found new business opportunities by opening doughnut shops throughout the city.



A shop in Los Angeles

Creative twists

Today, Los Angeles is often called the doughnut capital of the US, with about 1,500 independent shops throughout the city. Dunkin', the largest doughnut chain in the US, has stores in 44 states and territories and about 40 countries. Modern doughnut machines can make more than 2,000 doughnuts an hour. In addition to traditional doughnuts, bakers have experimented with new delicacies such as the Cronut, a mix of a doughnut and croissant, and the bagnut, a cross between a bagel and a doughnut. Unexpected toppings like bacon, Sriracha, hibiscus, and mac and cheese have all made their way onto doughnuts.

Brazil

Sonhos, which translates to "dreams" in Portuguese, are soft, spongy doughnuts sliced in two and filled with a sweet custard cream. As a final touch, they are topped with powdered sugar.

Iran

Made with syrup and dipped in saffron rosewater, *bamieh* is crispy on the outside and fluffy on the inside. It is a favorite dessert at the evening meal during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

A view of memorabilia at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York

GETTY IMAGES

Our cultural icons

80 The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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86 Presidential Pets

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90 Disney World

92 Preservation Hall

94 Wall Street

96 The Baseball Hall of Fame

A dazzling collection

"The Met," as it's called, is the largest museum in North America.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City showcases a vast collection of works that date back thousands of years.

The Roman sarcophagus

A brilliant idea

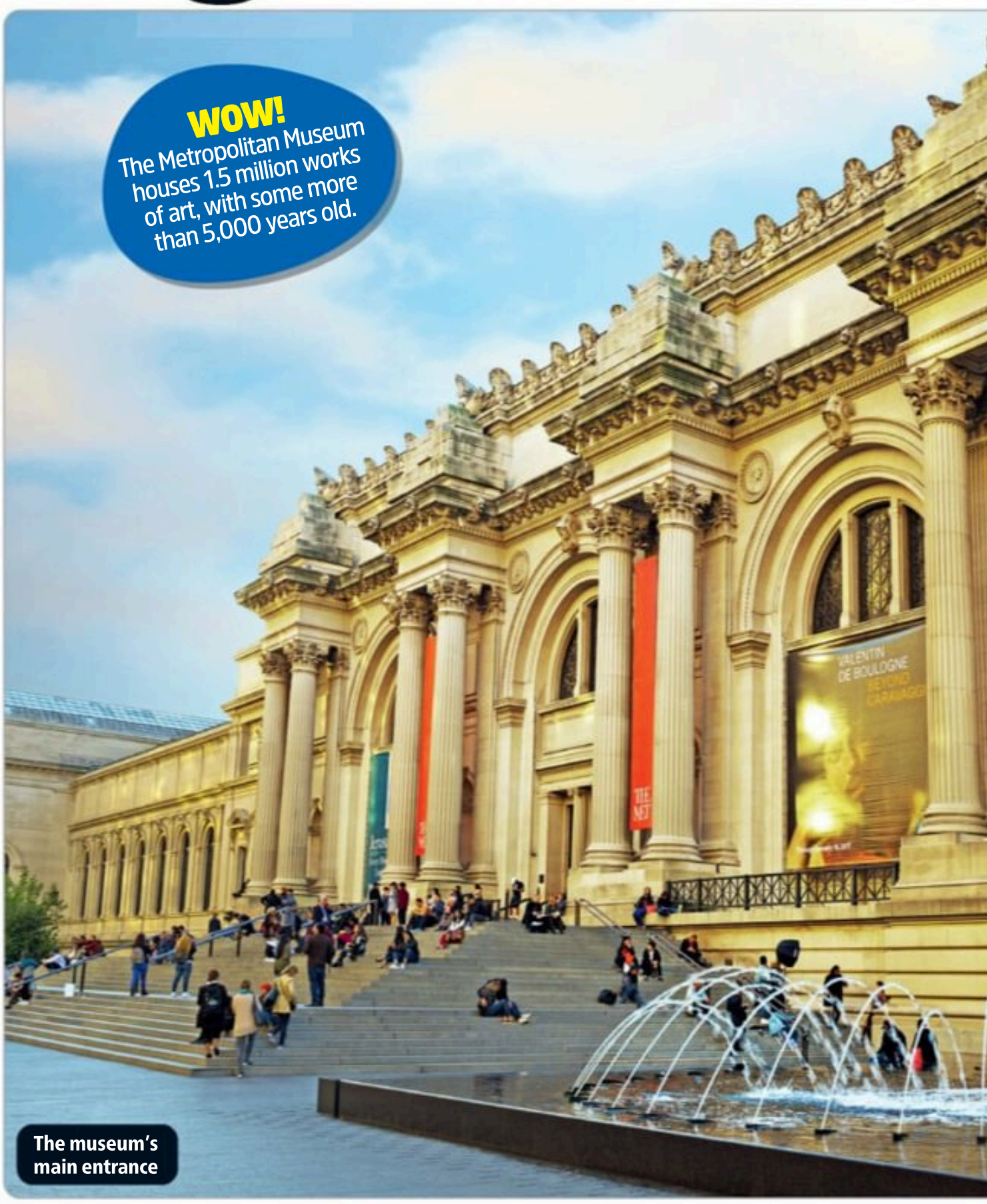
In 1866, a group of Americans living in Paris, France—then considered the art capital of the world—were inspired to create a national institution and gallery of art in the US. One of them, attorney John Jay, worked with civic leaders, artists, art collectors, and philanthropists to bring the vision to life. On April 13, 1870, the Metropolitan Museum of Art was officially established in New York City and opened in a modest building at 681 Fifth Avenue. Later that year, the museum acquired its first object, a Roman marble sarcophagus (coffin). The museum's collections—from European and American paintings to items from ancient times—began to grow.

Washington Crossing the Delaware

Becoming a cultural giant

On March 30, 1880, after a brief move to 128 West 14th Street, the museum reopened in its current location at 1000 Fifth Avenue on the edge of Central Park. Nine years later, the Met received two paintings by French artist Édouard Manet, often called the father of modern art. Emanuel Leutze's painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, one of the most famous works of art ever created, was given to the museum in 1897. By the early 1900s, the Met had become one of the most important art centers in the world.

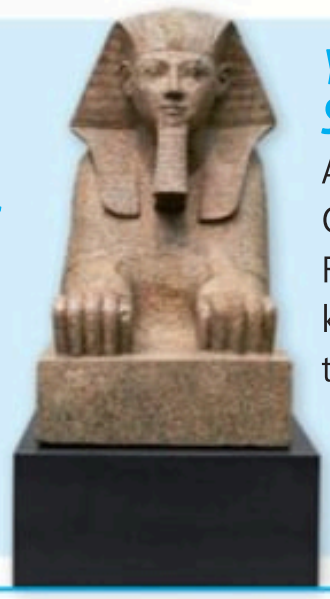
WOW!
The Metropolitan Museum houses 1.5 million works of art, with some more than 5,000 years old.


The museum's main entrance

Amazing art at the Met

Sphinx of Hatshepsut

Dating back to ancient Egypt, from about 1479–1458 BCE, this sculpture depicts a creature with the body of a lion and the head of a female pharaoh.

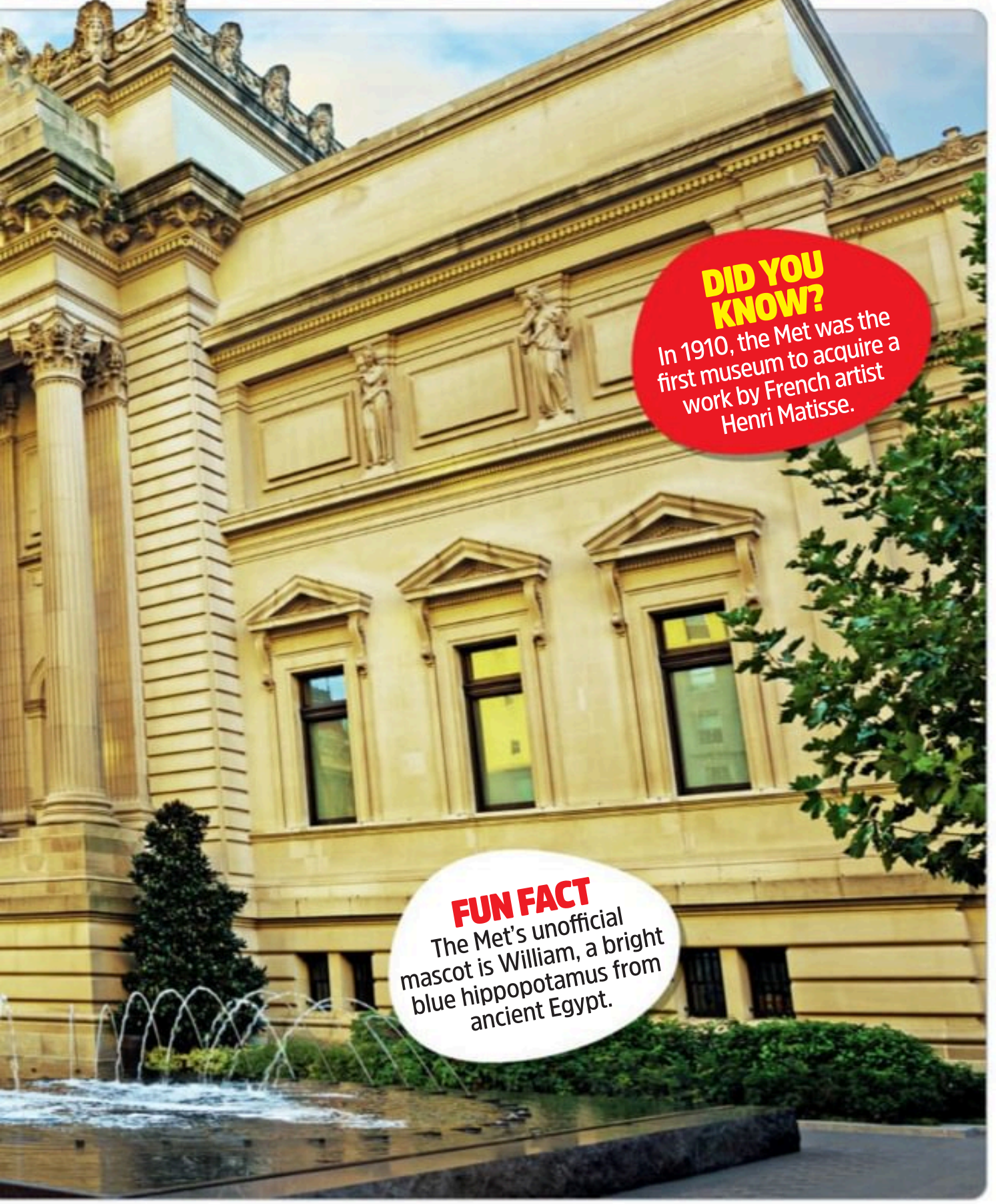


Young Mother Sewing

American artist Mary Cassatt studied art in Paris, France. She became known for her paintings that captured tender moments between mothers and children, as in this work from 1900.

SHUTTERSTOCK (3); ALAMY (3); PUBLIC DOMAIN VIA THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART (3)

# of treasures



DID YOU KNOW?
In 1910, the Met was the first museum to acquire a work by French artist Henri Matisse.

FUN FACT
The Met's unofficial mascot is William, a bright blue hippopotamus from ancient Egypt.

A European sculpture gallery

A stunning building

The Met building, designed by architect Richard Morris Hunt, is a work of art unto itself. Its grand exterior features arches and columns, and inside is a majestic main entry known as the Great Hall, created to inspire a feeling of awe upon arrival. A wing for Old Masters (European artists who worked from 1300 to 1800) and Impressionists (whose paintings are characterized by thin, visible brushstrokes) was added in 1975. The Asian art collection has grown to more than 50 galleries housing more than 35,000 works. Other additions to the Met include the modern and contemporary art department, which expanded with a new wing in 1987, and the European sculpture and decorative arts wing, completed in 1991.

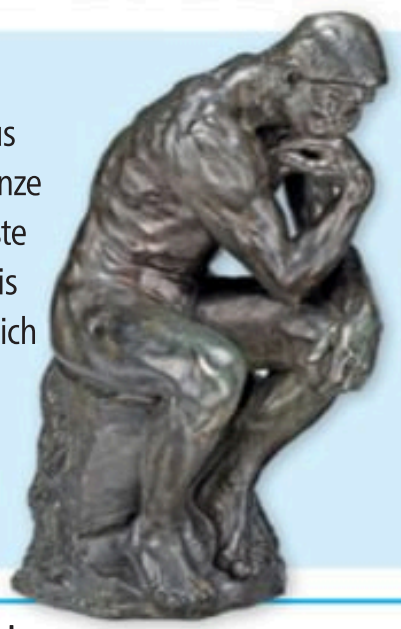
The Temple of Dendur

Visiting the museum

The Met now encompasses about 633,100 square feet of gallery space, making it the fourth-largest art museum in the world. More than 5 million people visit each year. One of its most iconic works is the ancient Temple of Dendur, a gift from Egypt to the US. The museum includes more than 2,500 European paintings—one of the most significant collections in the world—while the American wing holds about 20,000 works of art by African American, Euro American, Latin American, and Native American artists. Every year, the museum's Costume Institute holds an exhibition on fashion. The museum is now replacing an old section of the building with a new wing, which is the first wing ever designed by a woman, Mexican architect Frida Escobedo. It will house modern and contemporary art and is expected to open in 2030.

The Thinker

There are numerous versions of this bronze sculpture by Auguste Rodin, including this one at the Met, which was cast in 1910. It is just over 2 feet tall and weighs 185 pounds.



Bridge Over a Pond of Water Lilies

Claude Monet found inspiration for his oil paintings in his garden in Giverny, France. His famous *Water Lilies* series comprises about 250 canvases, including this one at the Met.

A symbol of dreams

A beacon of show business in Southern California is more than a century old.

Above the city of Los Angeles sits one of the world's most recognizable sights. The Hollywood sign is a cultural icon now, but it started as an expensive advertisement.

The original sign had 13 letters.

Hollywood history

In 1887, a man named Harvey Wilcox owned land in Southern California. His wife suggested naming it "Hollywood." Sunny weather started drawing filmmakers to the area in the early 1900s, and by the 1920s it had become the entertainment capital of the US. In 1923, *Los Angeles Times* publisher Harry Chandler spent $21,000 to put a large sign on a peak called Mount Lee to advertise his real estate development. The sign read "Hollywoodland" and was intended to be temporary.

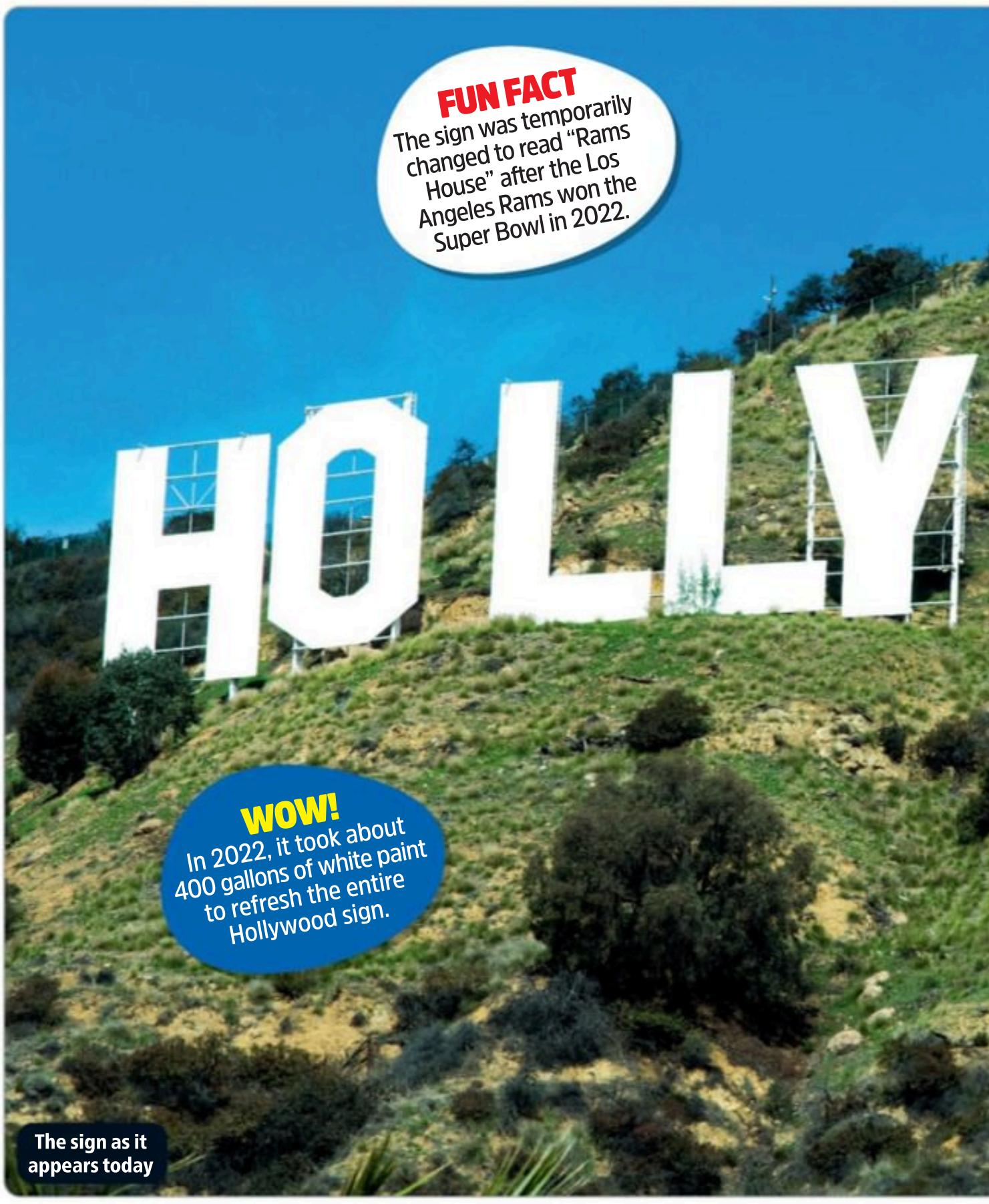
Workers touch up the sign.

Building a legend

To erect the sign on the mountain's steep slope, workers who had been hired for the project carried it up dirt paths in pieces. The white block letters, each about 30 feet wide and 45 feet tall and made of wood and sheet metal, were held up by telephone poles, scaffolding, pipes, and wires. The sign was also built with 4,000 light bulbs, which flashed each night. The bulbs were expensive to maintain, however, and in 1933 the lights were turned off.

FUN FACT
The sign was temporarily changed to read "Rams House" after the Los Angeles Rams won the Super Bowl in 2022.

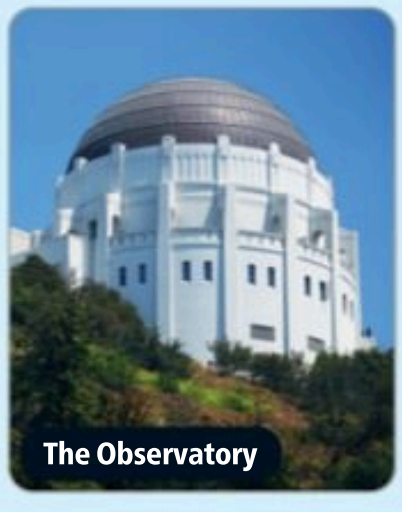
WOW!
In 2022, it took about 400 gallons of white paint to refresh the entire Hollywood sign.



The sign as it appears today

Hollywood hot spots

The Hollywood sign is one of several world-famous landmarks located in Southern California. Here are three more iconic sites in the area.


The Observatory

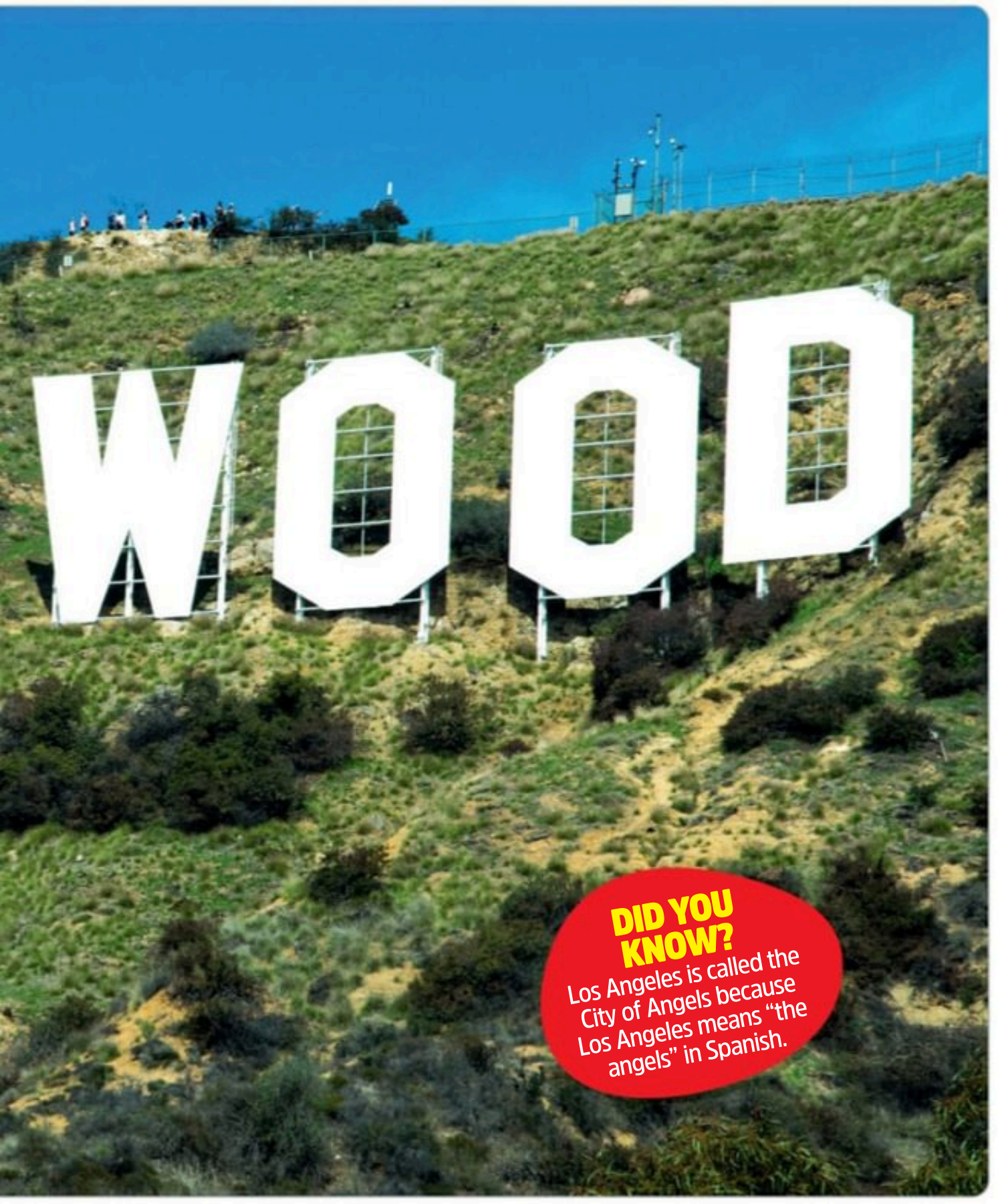
Griffith Observatory

High in the Hollywood Hills, east of the sign, sits the Griffith Observatory, which opened to the public in 1935. Visitors can get great views of the Pacific Ocean and Los Angeles and enjoy an incredible star show at night. The observatory is known for its round astronomy towers.

The Bowl

GETTY IMAGES (5); ALAMY (3)

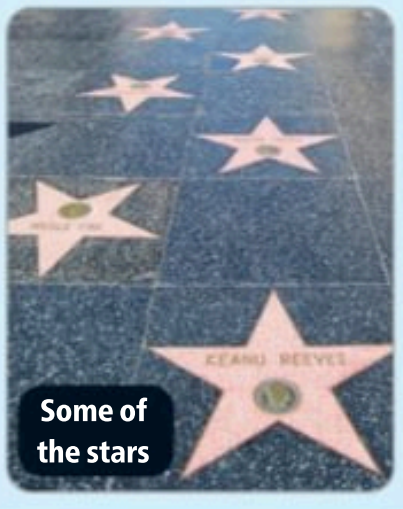
on a hillside



DID YOU KNOW?
Los Angeles is called the City of Angels because Los Angeles means "the angels" in Spanish.

Hollywood Bowl

An iconic amphitheater marked its 100th anniversary in 2022. The Hollywood Bowl is an open-air venue where well-known acts, including the Beatles, Elton John, and Gwen Stefani, have performed. It offers a view of the Hollywood sign behind its famous white shell backdrop.



Some of the stars

Hollywood Walk of Fame

Visitors to Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street can stroll to see some of the most famous names in the world. Sidewalks are lined with more than 2,700 pink and gold stars with celebrity names etched on them. Each year, more big names are honored with a star on the Walk of Fame.

The space shuttle Endeavour flies by.

A striking symbol

At first local residents called the sign "an eyesore," but in time, affection for it grew. It became a symbol of the film industry, beckoning those dreaming of stardom to Los Angeles. In 1949, the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce took over maintenance and ownership of the sign. The "H" had fallen and needed to be replaced, and the word "land" was removed. In 1973, the sign received Historic Landmark status from the City of Los Angeles. It was deteriorating with age, however, and was replaced in 1978 with letters made of corrugated steel. The sign has appeared in films like *The Muppet Movie* and *Superman*. In 2012, the space shuttle Endeavour did a special fly-by near the sign and other regional landmarks.

Actress Michelle Yeoh on a photo shoot

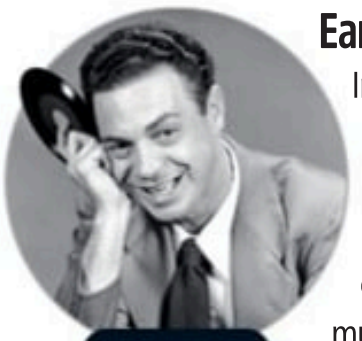
Celebrating a century

Today the Hollywood sign is one of the top attractions in Los Angeles. Before its 100th anniversary in 2023, it was cleaned and given a fresh coat of paint. While the sign was being polished up, people were able to take photos with a smaller version of it at different locations across the city. That year, the Los Angeles City Council declared October 31 "Hollywood Sign Day." Since then, the Hollywood Sign Trust, an organization that protects and preserves the landmark, launched a digital time capsule, asking people to send in stories, photos, and videos sharing what the Hollywood sign means to them. The trust also hopes to create a visitor center for the sign in time for the 2028 Summer Olympics in the city. "The sign is the pride of Los Angeles," said Jeff Zarrinnam, chairperson of the Trust.

A place to celebrate

A monument in Cleveland pays tribute to the greatest in the history of rock.

Located on the city's lakefront in Ohio, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, also known as Rock Hall, honors iconic achievers in music.



Alan Freed

Early days

In 1983, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Foundation was established to create a museum that would document the history of rock music and honor legendary artists. The foundation, led by music industry executives, held a national competition to select a city for the venue. In May 1986, the foundation chose Cleveland, Ohio, where several record companies were located and where disc jockey Alan Freed brought the phrase "rock and roll" into the mainstream on 1950s radio. Famous architect I.M. Pei designed a glittering structure of geometric shapes in glass and metal on the shores of Lake Erie. On September 2, 1995, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame opened.

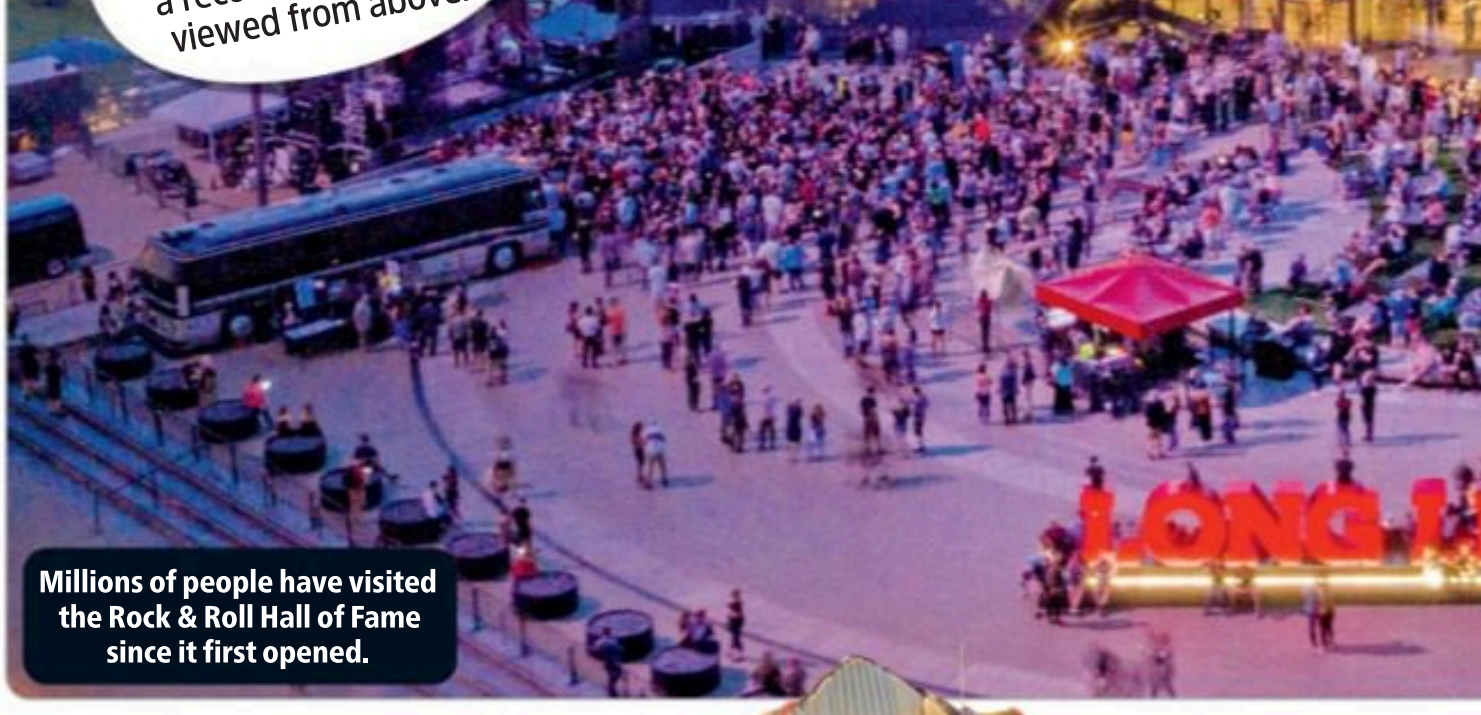
Aretha Franklin

Famous honorees

Years before the building was completed, honorees began to be inducted. In 1986, the first class included Chuck Berry, James Brown, Ray Charles, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, and Elvis Presley. Alan Freed was also inducted in the non-performer category. The following year, the hall admitted its first female inductee, Aretha Franklin. There are about 400 inductees, and each artist or band has a signature plaque hanging in the hall. Among those admitted are the Beatles, Bon Jovi, Green Day, Led Zeppelin, LL Cool J, Stevie Nicks, Nirvana, Dolly Parton, Prince, the Rolling Stones, Bruce Springsteen, Tina Turner, U2, and the Who.

ROCK ON
The museum celebrated its 1995 opening with a seven-hour concert featuring artists such as Chuck Berry, Bob Dylan, and Aretha Franklin.

FUN FACT
The hall and its round pedestrian plaza in front were designed to resemble a record player when viewed from above.



Millions of people have visited the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame since it first opened.

Inside the Hall of Fame

John Lennon's Sgt. Pepper outfit

The star wore this look on the cover of the Beatles' 1967 album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

Elvis Presley's motorcycle

Elvis, called "The King of Rock 'n' Roll," loved motorcycles. His 1975 SuperTrike has been on loan to the hall since 2013.

The Supremes' designer gowns

Known for their striking style, this superstar trio wore these sequined, feather-trimmed Bob Mackie gowns while performing in a 1969 TV special.

ROCK & ROLL HALL OF FAME/AERIAL AGENTS; GETTY IMAGES (4); ALAMY; SILVER SCREEN PROD.; RON COGSWELL VIA FLICKR; MOTOWN RECORDS; STEVEN MILLER VIA FLICKR

legendary musicians

MUSIC MAN
Eric Clapton is the only artist inducted three times, as a member of two bands and as a solo artist.

Eminem and LL Cool J in 2021

Choosing nominees and inductees

Musicians are eligible for the Hall of Fame 25 years after the release of their first commercial recording. Other criteria for admission include the influence of an artist on the development of rock and roll. Artists are inducted into one of four categories: performer, musical excellence (to honor veteran performers), musical influence, and non-performer (such as producers). A committee identifies nominees who meet the criteria, then narrows the list for a ballot. More than 1,000 music historians, industry professionals, and past inductees vote on the names. Nominees with the highest votes are chosen for induction and celebrated in Cleveland or New York with a ceremony and performances by new and past inductees.

Cars from a U2 tour hang in the lobby.

A dramatic expansion

Renovations are currently underway to add another 50,000 square feet of space to Rock Hall, along with a new triangular building that complements the original structure. The $175 million expansion, which began in 2023, will include a new lobby, a new indoor concert venue, and larger exhibition galleries. The work is set to be completed later this year.

Johnny Cash's custom guitar

One of the country legend's favorite guitars, an acoustic Fender made for him, is displayed in the hall beside his trademark dark concert attire.

Taylor Swift's catsuit

She isn't eligible for induction yet, but fans can see her black catsuit on exhibit. She wore it to the 2021 induction of singer-songwriter Carole King.

The White House was

Meet the furry and feathered First Pets of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

America's Presidents have a long tradition of bringing their pets—from dozens of dogs and cats to quite a few wild animals—when they move into the White House. Read on to find out about the many creatures, great and small, who have kept the First Families company.

Abraham Lincoln's dog Fido

Part of the family

For more than 100 years, pets have been a common sight at the White House. Out of America's 47 Presidents, 31 have had a dog. Several more had cats and other companions. Pets sometimes helped the busy leaders relax. Abraham Lincoln's law partner once wrote that if the President was tired, "he would get down with a little dog or kitten to recover." The animals have also protected their famous owners. George W. Bush said his dog Barney guarded the White House entrance "as if he were a Secret Service agent."

America's favorite First Pets

Many Presidential pets have won the hearts of Americans. Fala, the Scottish terrier that belonged to Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), was so popular that a movie was made about him. When John F. Kennedy's dog Pushinka had puppies, 5,000 people wrote in asking to adopt one. Ronald Reagan's dog Lucky inspired the creation of the Presidential Pet Museum, which still exists online. Bill Clinton's cat Socks answered letters from kids and appeared on the White House website.

LAWN MOWERS
President Woodrow Wilson used a flock of grazing sheep to keep the White House lawn in good shape.

FUN FACT
Legend has it that John Quincy Adams once kept an alligator in the bathtub of the East Room.

Teddy Roosevelt's pony (above, ridden by his son) and one-legged chicken (right)

Barack Obama's dog Bo

Woodrow Wilson's sheep

Calvin Coolidge's lion cub

Warren Harding's squirrel Pete

Animal shenanigans

Cats will be cats, dogs will be dogs, and…raccoons will be raccoons? Over the years, Presidential pets have had a lot of fun—and gotten into all sorts of mischief.

Teddy Roosevelt

Pete the dog

Teddy Roosevelt's dog Pete almost caused an international crisis when he ripped the pants off a French ambassador and chased him up a tree.

Rebecca with First Lady Grace Coolidge

Rebecca the raccoon

A pet raccoon ran away from Calvin Coolidge's summer residence in 1927 and climbed a tall tree, refusing to come down "in spite of all entreaties."

GETTY IMAGES (12); ABRAHAM LINCOLN PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM; LIBRARY OF CONGRESS (4); ALAMY; WHITE HOUSE

their home, too

John F. Kennedy's daughter, Caroline, on Macaroni the pony
Calvin Coolidge's collie Rob Roy in a bonnet
One of Lyndon B. Johnson's beagles
George W. Bush's spaniel Spot

LOYAL FRIEND
There's a statue of Franklin Roosevelt's dog Fala at the President's memorial in Washington, DC.

FDR and Fala

Fala the dog

On a boat trip to the West Indies, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's dog Fala licked the feet of sailors who were lying on the deck to cool off.

Socks

Socks the cat

Bill Clinton's cat, Socks, didn't get along with Buddy the dog. The animals had to be kept apart in the White House. Socks favored the Oval Office and sat at the President's desk.

First Lady Barbara Bush with dog Millie and pups

Not just cats and dogs

William Henry Harrison had a cow and a goat at the White House, while Grover Cleveland raised chickens at a nearby stable. James Buchanan received a herd of elephants as a gift from the King of Siam (now Thailand). Newspapers called it the Pennsylvania Avenue Zoo when Calvin Coolidge housed a bobcat, a donkey, lion cubs, a black bear, a pygmy hippo, and a pair of raccoons. Kennedy's family had hamsters, a rabbit, a canary, ducks, parakeets, and ponies. Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt, who helped create the National Park System, had a zebra, an owl, and a badger. No one is quite sure why Warren Harding and Harry Truman both kept pet squirrels named Pete, but government officials made sure to bring nuts to their meetings.

Joe Biden with Major in the Oval Office

From rescue to executive resident

While many pets were gifted, bought, or born into the First Family (like Bush's English springer spaniel Spot, who was the puppy of Millie, his father George H.W. Bush's dog), others were rescued from a life on the streets. Lincoln was known to bring home stray cats, and Lyndon B. Johnson's daughter Luci found their dog Yuki at a gas station. Joe Biden's German shepherd Major was honored with an "indoguration" ceremony when he became the first shelter dog to live in the White House.

The vibrant center of

Experience the thrill when the lights go up on America's grandest theaters.

Only four Broadway theaters are actually on the street called Broadway in New York City. The other 37 are on streets nearby. Together, they make up the neighborhood where the nation's most spectacular musicals and plays take place.

The Great White Way

A brief history of Broadway

Theater performances in New York City started before the Revolutionary War (1775–1783). As the city grew, the most successful theaters were on or near Broadway, a major road in the city's center. Bright white electric signs advertised shows in the theater district, earning it the nickname "The Great White Way." Productions tripled by the 1920s, with as many as 297 different shows each year.

Changing with the times

At first, Broadway offered mostly dance and variety shows for wealthy audiences. Over time, dramas became popular. Broadway also embraced musical theater, which transformed American culture. *Oklahoma!* (1943) was the first musical megahit, running for 2,212 performances. Ticket prices rose as shows grew more extravagant. In 1984 it cost an average of $3 million to produce a Broadway musical. Today it costs $12 million to $18 million.

Oklahoma!

The Phantom of the Opera

The Lion King

Wicked

WOW! With 13,981 performances over the course of 35 years, *The Phantom of the Opera* is the longest-running Broadway show.

Annie

Harry Potter and the Cursed Child

GETTY IMAGES (6); JOAN MARCUS (2); SARA KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX (4); CHRIS SORENSEN/REDUX; COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

live theater

Cats

My Fair Lady

CHILD STARS
The youngest Broadway performer to win a Tony Award was Frankie Michaels, age 11. Eight-year-old Evanna Lien was the youngest nominee.

Fiddler on the Roof

Hamilton

Getting ready for *The Lion King*

How the shows come together

Lead performers and additional cast members, called the ensemble, appear onstage, but hundreds of people work to make a Broadway show run. Understudies fill in if anyone is unable to perform. Crew members control lights and sound and move scenery and props. An orchestra often plays in a "pit" under the stage. Long before opening night, the show begins with a playwright's script, which a director interprets from page to stage. A producer raises money and oversees the production, hiring choreographers to plan the dance moves, set designers to create the scenery, and costume designers and makeup artists to help the performers look just right.

Aladdin on Broadway

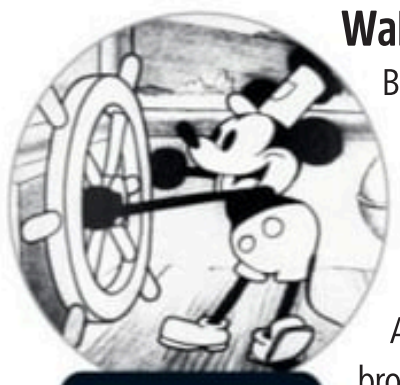
Broadway hits continue

During the Covid-19 pandemic, theaters sat empty and nearly 100,000 people were out of work. While stages were dark, online performances and streaming versions of hit shows like *Hamilton* brought theater into America's homes. By 2021, Broadway was back—and, in the words of superstar Hugh Jackman, "not just as good as it was—but better." Theatrical hits in recent years have included the musicals *& Juliet* and *Six*, as well as *The Outsiders*, a musical adaptation of the novel and film. In 2024, *The Outsiders* won four Tony awards, which are given to honor excellence in Broadway theater. The Tonys are named after Antoinette "Tony" Perry, a co-founder of the American Theatre Wing, and have been bestowed every year since 1947.

A magical kingdom

Learn the story behind the world's most popular amusement park.

The Walt Disney Company is known for everything from blockbuster movies to theme parks. Its most-visited destination is Disney World in Orlando, Florida.



Steamboat Willie

Walt Disney's vision

Born in 1901, Walter Disney loved drawing and painting from a young age. At age 7, he began selling his art to neighbors in Missouri. As adults, Walt and his brother Roy opened the Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio, which became Walt Disney Studios, in California. America loved their 1928 black and white film, *Steamboat Willie*, and its star, Mickey Mouse. The studio went on to make huge hits like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Pinocchio*, and *Cinderella*. But Disney wanted to do more. Children were sending letters asking to visit the studios, and he wanted to create a fun off-screen experience for families. Thinking about how much his two daughters loved carnival rides, Disney decided to build an amusement park.

Bringing the magic to life

Disney bought 160 acres of land in California and opened Disneyland in 1955. It was so unusual that it sparked the term "theme park" because its attractions were not just rides but themed experiences. "I want [visitors] to feel they're in another world," Disney said. In the early 1960s, he began planning a larger property on nearly 28,000 acres in Florida. The resort would have rides, hotels, golf courses, and shopping. In 1971, the gates opened to the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World Resort.

Walt Disney with his plan for Disneyland

Indiana Jones

Animal Kingdom

FESTIVE START

During the grand opening of Disney World, a 1,076-member marching band paraded through the park.

Mickey Mouse and friends at Walt Disney World

Disney's classic rides

Magic Kingdom was one of the first parks to add themes and tell stories with its rides. Take a look at three major attractions that have delighted visitors for decades.

Jungle Cruise

One of the park's first rides has gone through many changes over the years. Today, riders embark on a river voyage featuring joke-telling boat captains, clueless tourists, and mischievous animals. This beloved ride also inspired a film, released in 2021.

DISNEY/MATT STROSHANE; DISNEY/DAVID ROARK; DISNEY (2); ALAMY (6); GETTY IMAGES

for all ages

Toy Story

STYLISH MOUSE
Mickey Mouse has about 136 outfits in his closet, including a tuxedo and a scuba suit.

DID YOU KNOW?
A network of tunnels, called the Utilidor, lies beneath the Magic Kingdom. Employees use it to get around.

Epcot Center

From then to now

By 1982, more than 100 million people had visited Disney World. That year, a new park called Epcot (short for "Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow") opened at the resort. Disney had envisioned Epcot as a futuristic community, but it evolved into a theme park celebrating global cultures and technology. In 1989, a park now known as Disney's Hollywood Studios opened, with a working film studio. In 1990, "The Disney Decade" began, with new hotels, rides, and a fourth park, Animal Kingdom. Many rides were based on movies, and in the 1990s, rides like Tower of Terror and Pirates of the Caribbean inspired movies of their own.

Star Wars

Into the future

With four theme parks, two water parks, and an expanding cast of characters, Walt Disney World attracts tens of millions of visitors each year, and the magic keeps evolving. In recent years, Epcot has debuted new attractions in which guests can feel "shrunk" to the size of Remy the rat from the film *Ratatouille*, explore an outdoor trail inspired by *Moana*, and join the Guardians of the Galaxy for an adventure on one of the world's largest enclosed coasters. Magic Kingdom has also added a starlight parade featuring moments from fan favorites like *Frozen* and *Encanto*. Walt Disney once said that his theme parks would never be completed "as long as there is imagination left in the world." Still, he said, "I only hope that we never lose sight of one thing—that it was all started by a mouse."

It's a Small World

Originally made for the 1964–1965 New York World's Fair, this ride was re-created for Disney World's opening day. The 10-minute tour celebrates children all over the world, with about 300 dolls dancing and singing the iconic theme song in five languages.

Space Mountain

This 1975 roller coaster was the first to be completely controlled by a computer. Designed to be like an astronaut's journey into outer space, the ride takes place in darkness inside a 300-foot dome. Riders blast off on two different tracks, passing stars, planets, and a wormhole.

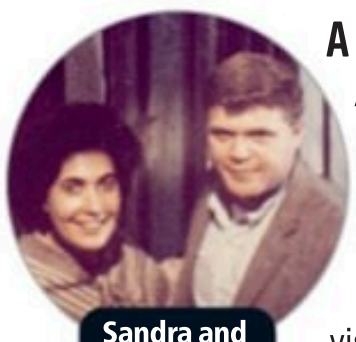
A famous setting for

The world-renowned venue has been home to jazz musicians for decades.

In New Orleans, Louisiana, one little performance space is keeping musical traditions alive. Discover Preservation Hall.

Jazz is born

New Orleans is considered the birthplace of jazz. The musical style has its roots in the city's Congo Square, where enslaved people gathered to play songs from their home countries. A mix of music from Africa, the Caribbean, and the southern US developed, and jazz emerged as its own genre at the turn of the 20th century. By the 1950s, though, rock and roll had the spotlight. As jazz venues closed, E. Lorenz "Larry" Borenstein invited local musicians to play in the courtyard of an art gallery he owned. Soon, nightly concerts were held there.


Sandra and Allan Jaffe

A place to play

At the start of the 1960s, Allan and Sandra Jaffe, a newlywed couple from Pennsylvania with a deep love of New Orleans jazz, visited the city. They decided to make it their home and became regular attendees at the music sessions in the gallery. In September 1961, Borenstein handed over the keys to the Jaffes so they could run the space themselves. Allan, a tuba player, drove his motor scooter around town looking for jazz musicians and offering them jobs. Sandra organized the concert schedules. The building was soon known as Preservation Hall (because it was helping to "preserve" jazz). At the time, many states enforced segregation, but Preservation Hall was a rare place where Black and white band members and audiences could come together to share music.

DID YOU KNOW?
Every year, more than 150,000 people visit Preservation Hall to hear traditional "NOLA" — New Orleans — jazz.

The Preservation Hall Jazz Band in 2011 included (from left) Freddie Lonzo, Joe Lastie, Ben Jaffe, Mark Braud, and Charlie Gabriel.

Famous jazz performers

Over the years, many notable musicians have performed at Preservation Hall. Here are a few of the most admired figures from the venue's history.

Sweet Emma Barrett

This self-taught pianist and singer was a pioneer of jazz and a trailblazer for women. She began playing publicly at age 12 and continued for 70 years, becoming one of Preservation Hall's most beloved bandleaders. She was known to wear a red cap and bells that jingled as she played.

MARK PETERSON/REDUX; COURTESY OF PRESERVATION HALL (2); GETTY IMAGES (5)

jazz in New Orleans

SPECIAL HONOR

In 2006, President George W. Bush awarded the Preservation Hall Jazz Band the prestigious National Medal of Arts.

Spreading a city's spirit

Before long, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band was formed. Several groups of musicians, performing under this name, began touring the US in 1963. Eventually, they traveled globally and played alongside famous musical acts. The band helped spark new interest in New Orleans music and attracted tourists and aspiring musicians to the city. When the hall had to temporarily close in 2005 due to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, the band continued touring and sharing the spirit of the city. They have performed at festivals, sports events (above), and New York City's Carnegie Hall. To date, the band has recorded about 20 albums featuring jazz classics and their own original songs.

A midnight concert

Still making history

Today, Preservation Hall is owned by Ben Jaffe, Allan and Sandra's son. About 60 musicians perform, including musical director Charlie Gabriel, age 93, who has been called the "elder statesman" of New Orleans jazz. Portraits of musicians adorn the walls. While the band's lineup includes many songs that were played there in the 1960s, its former artistic director, Ron Rona, said the word "preservation" could be deceptive. "Jazz is an evolution," he told *Smithsonian Magazine*. "The melodies might be the same, the forms might be the same. But the musicians put themselves into it." In that way, he said, "These are brand-new tunes."

George Lewis

Clarinetist George Lewis helped lead the revival of traditional jazz in New Orleans and around the world. He became a regular performer and bandleader at Preservation Hall, toured in Europe and Japan, and played with nearly every local jazz musician during his career.

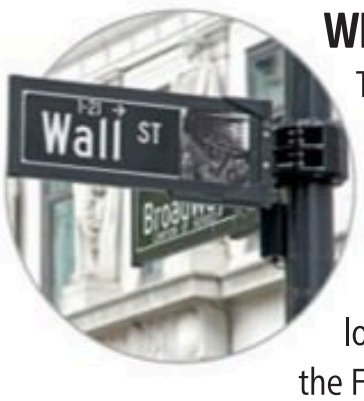
Punch Miller

Also known as "Kid Punch," this talented instrumentalist and vocalist was best known for his nimble trumpet-playing. He was a regular player at Larry Borenstein's gallery and one of the first stars at Preservation Hall. His performances in New Orleans spanned more than 50 years.

A powerful part of

These two words represent the heart of the business industry.

Wall Street is the name of a street that runs for about eight blocks in the southern part of Manhattan, a borough of New York City. Wall Street is also much more than that.



What is Wall Street?

The street and the area immediately around it are known as the Financial District. The New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) is located on Wall Street, and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York is located in the Financial District. The term "Wall Street," as it is commonly used today, does not refer to a physical location but to big business in the US as a whole. Citibank, Morgan Stanley, JP Morgan Chase, and Goldman Sachs are some of the largest Wall Street businesses.

Morgan Stanley headquarters

Buying and selling

The NYSE is a place where stocks (portions of a company that can be owned by the public) are bought and sold. It is the biggest stock exchange in the world, with billions of stock trades happening every day. People who handle buying and selling stocks on behalf of clients are known as stockbrokers. Another major Wall Street business is investment banking. One of the main things investment banks do is help companies with complicated business deals. Other people who work on Wall Street include financial analysts and financial advisers. Wall Street gets criticized, too, with some people arguing that the financial industry has too much power and influence in the US.

The New York Stock Exchange became a National Historic Landmark in 1978.

BUILDING A BARRIER
The name "Wall Street" refers to a wall Dutch settlers built as a military defense on the tip of New York City in 1653.

The bell and the bull

Each day the brass bells of the New York Stock Exchange ring at 9:30 a.m. Eastern Time when the stock market opens and at 4 p.m. when it closes. Four electronic bells in the building are operated together by a single control panel. A tradition is to invite guests to ring the bell. Ringers have included famous athletes, Broadway stars, and business leaders celebrating their companies' "going public" — becoming available on the stock market.

Charging Bull, a bronze sculpture that is 16 feet long and weighs three and a half tons, is one of the most famous landmarks in the Financial District. It was made by sculptor Arturo Di Modica to represent a bullish (strong) market. With help from friends, Di Modica secretly placed it in front of the NYSE one night in 1989. The bull was later moved nearby, where it still stands today.

GETTY IMAGES (7); ALAMY

our financial history

DID YOU KNOW?
A "bull market" refers to a market where stock prices are rising. A "bear market" is when stock prices are falling.

FUN FACT
On April 30, 1789, George Washington took his oath of office as the first US President at Federal Hall on Wall Street.

Signing the Buttonwood Agreement

The start of stock trading

Business on Wall Street began when a slave market was established there in 1711. It remained open until 1762, although New York state did not officially end slavery until 1827. In the late 1700s, stock traders began doing business on Wall Street under a buttonwood, or sycamore, tree. In 1792, these traders signed the Buttonwood Agreement, which required business on the street to be conducted through approved stockbrokers. The New York Stock and Exchange Board, which was modeled after a similar organization in Philadelphia, was created in 1817. The first stock ticker, which tracks changes in the prices of stocks and other financial products, was introduced in 1867. In 1884, the Dow Jones average was introduced to track overall stock market activity.

A stock exchange ticker

A hub of activity

The current NYSE building (the largest photo at left) opened in 1903. A crisis hit Wall Street and the US when the stock market crashed in 1929 and triggered the Great Depression, a period from 1929 to the late 1930s when unemployment and poverty soared. The NASDAQ, another method for tracking market activity, was launched in 1971. Now there are more than 2,400 companies listed on the NYSE, and about $80 billion worth of stocks are bought and sold on it every day.

Above: The Harlem Globetrotters ring the bell. Right: *Charging Bull*.

They were the heroes

The story of baseball is told inside a shrine to the sport in Cooperstown.

Located in a small town in Central New York, the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum is a tribute to America's pastime.

Stephen C. Clark

A persistent myth

Cooperstown is the Hall of Fame's home because of a myth. Abner Graves, a mining engineer, made up a story about a young man named Abner Doubleday inventing the game in the town in 1839. Sports executives endorsed the story in about 1907—and when Cooperstown resident Stephen C. Clark later had the idea to build a hall of fame there to honor the sport, baseball's National League supported it. The first Hall of Fame class was inducted in 1936, and the building opened on June 12, 1939. To this day, some people still believe baseball was invented in Cooperstown.

Effa Manley

Who is in the Hall of Fame?

There are 354 members in the hall. They include 273 former players as well as managers, umpires, and executives. Each member has a bronze plaque showing their likeness and their accomplishments in the sport. Players and managers are depicted wearing team caps, and those who played for or managed multiple teams typically wear the cap of the team they are most closely associated with. For nearly 60 years, because of racism, Black players were not hired by Major League Baseball and played instead in the separate Negro Leagues. There are 37 people in the hall recognized for their accomplishments in those leagues. They include Effa Manley, a Negro Leagues executive who is the only woman in the Hall of Fame.

MAJOR HONOR
About 1% of people who have played Major League Baseball have made it into the Hall of Fame.

FIRST CLASS
The first Baseball Hall of Fame class in 1936 featured Babe Ruth, Christy Mathewson, Honus Wagner, Ty Cobb, and Walter Johnson.

Highlights at the museum

Cy Young's ball

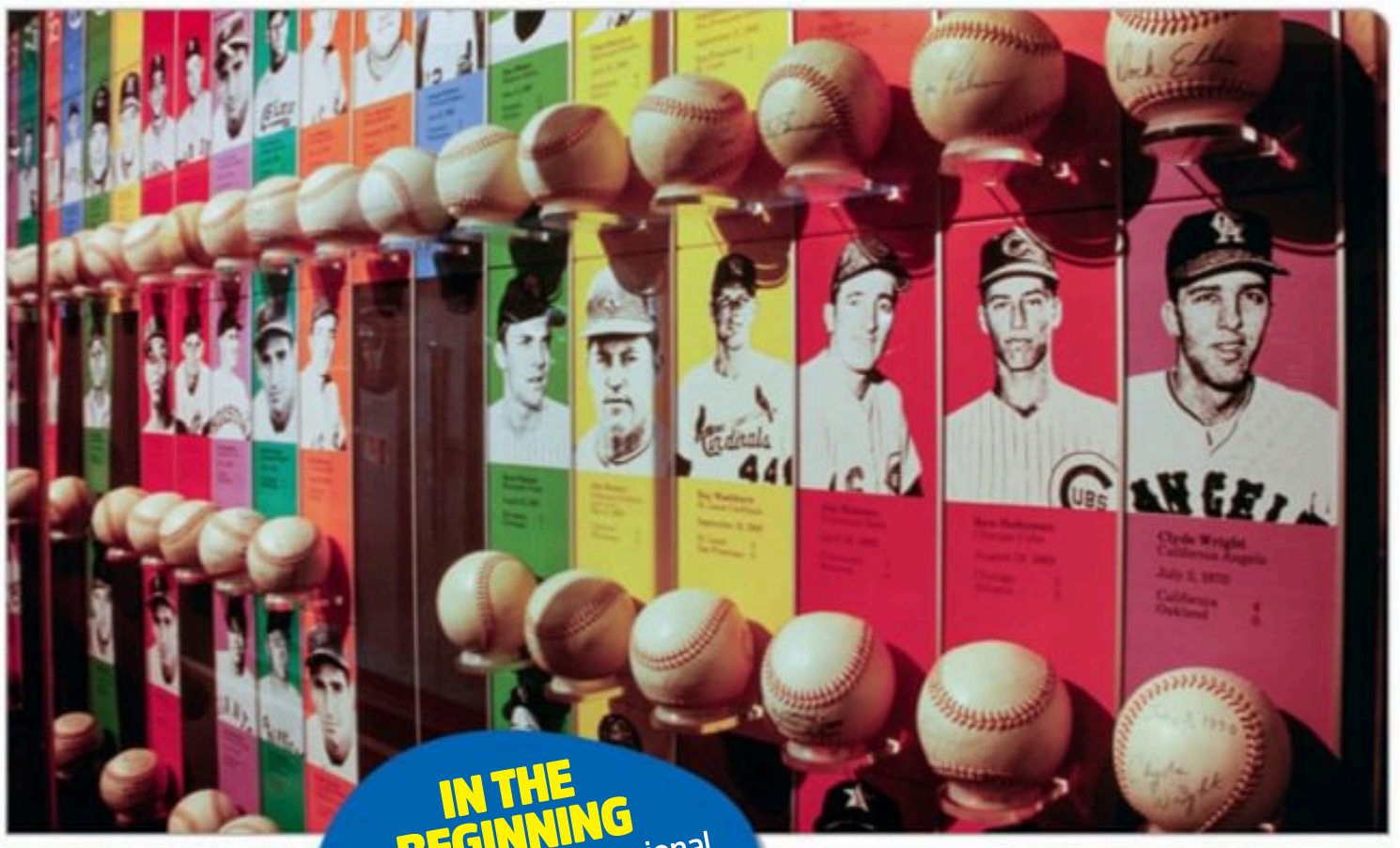
The famous pitcher threw this baseball when he won an unprecedented 500th game for his Cleveland team in 1910. Young also signed the ball.

Babe Ruth's bat

The star slugger was the first player in MLB history to hit 60 home runs in a season. He did it in 1927 while playing for the New York Yankees, the World Series winner that year. He hit 28 of the home runs with this bat, which is carved with a notch for every homer.

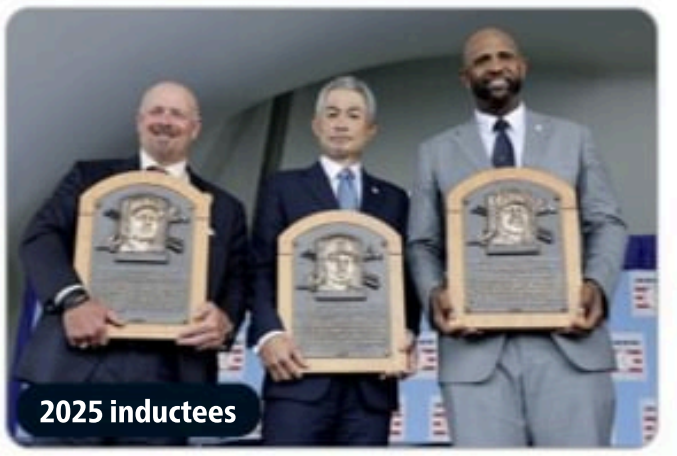
ALAMY (4); MILO STEWART JR./NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM (5); RLBBERLIN VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM; GETTY IMAGES (3)

# of their game



IN THE BEGINNING
The first known professional baseball game was played in May 1869 and won by the Cincinnati Red Stockings.

Inside the hall (clockwise from top left): a baseball card display, exhibits about no-hitters and notable women, the plaques



2025 inductees

How honorees are chosen

Players who retired from the sport between five and 15 years ago are eligible to be voted into the Hall of Fame by the Baseball Writers' Association of America (BBWAA). The association's electors fill out ballots in which they select up to 10 names, and nominees who make it onto at least 75% of the ballots are admitted into the hall. There is a separate group of nominators called the Era Committees. They select players who are no longer eligible to be voted in by the BBWAA, as well as managers, umpires, and executives. Hall of Fame members are inducted in an annual ceremony that takes place in July. The most recent inductees were pitchers CC Sabathia and Billy Wagner and right fielder Ichiro Suzuki in 2025. The ceremony for the 2026 inductees will take place on July 26.

Hank Aaron's jersey

Pieces of Americana

The Hall of Fame is part of a museum that is open to guests almost every day. At least 18 million people have visited. The bronze plaques are displayed in a gallery on the first floor, and exhibits throughout the museum highlight baseball history. Subjects range from baseball cards and records to the history of the sport in Latin America and the contributions women have made to the game. The *Autumn Glory* exhibit features gear and equipment used in famous World Series games. Iconic players Babe Ruth and Hank Aaron have their own exhibits. At his induction in 2023, Hall of Famer Scott Rolen said, "On this stage is baseball greatness."

Jackie Robinson's cap

In 1947, Jackie Robinson was the first Black player hired into the MLB. On October 4, 1955, he wore this cap when the Brooklyn Dodgers beat the New York Yankees to win the World Series.

Willie Mays' glove

In the 1954 World Series, Willie Mays of the New York Giants used this glove to make an over-the-shoulder catch in center field. "The Catch," as it's known, is considered one of the greatest plays in baseball history.

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